



HOME FROM THE SEA



CAPTAIN SIR ARTHUR H. ROSTON, K.B.E., R.D., R.N.R. (Retd.)

# HOME FROM THE SEA

BY

SIR ARTHUR H. ROSTRON

K.B.E., R.D., R.N.R.

(Late Commodore of the Cunard Fleet)



CASSELL & COMPANY LTD.

LONDON, TORONTO, MELBOURNE & SYDNEY



*First Published, 1931*

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

This book is dedicated to all my old shipmates who have so loyally helped me to "carry on"; to the thousands of passengers who have crossed the ocean with me and the many who have honoured me with their friendship and whose hospitality and kindness I have received in such a marked degree.

It is dedicated to my old shipmates in a sense of gratitude, knowing full well that it was to them I owed so much of the success I enjoyed during the years I had command.

My late passengers can now read of things I would never talk about, and I would mention that it was to the wireless officer in the *Carpathia*, through his attention to duty, and his interest in his work, that I am indebted for the opportunity to do something really useful, and it was then that I got my feet firmly planted on the ladder of success.



## CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
1. GOOD-BYE TO THE SEA . . . . .	1
2. ADVENTURES IN SAIL . . . . .	6
3. INTO STEAM . . . . .	29
4. COMMAND . . . . .	46
5. THE LOSS OF THE <i>TITANIC</i> . . . . .	55
6. WAR—WHY WE FAILED IN GALLIPOLI . . . . .	85
7. SIDELIGHTS ON “THE SHOW” . . . . .	105
8. H.M.I.S. <i>MAURETANIA</i> . . . . .	123
9. H.M.S. <i>TUBER ROSE</i> . . . . .	142
10. THE SOCIAL WHIRL . . . . .	155
11. MORE ATLANTIC NIGHTS . . . . .	172
12. THE AMERICANS . . . . .	193
13. “THE LINER SHE’S A LADY” . . . . .	210
14. THEN AND NOW . . . . .	227
15. A WORD FOR THE MEN . . . . .	243
16. “GO TO SEA, MY LADS” . . . . .	252
17. WHAT OF THE FUTURE? . . . . .	275



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	TO FACE PAGE
Captain Sir Arthur Rostron, K.B.E., R.D., R.N.R. (Retd.) . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
<i>R.M.S. Mauretania</i> . . . . .	32
<i>Titanic</i> passengers coming aboard the <i>Carpathia</i> . . . . .	56
Fifth Officer Lightoller bringing in the <i>Titanic's</i> boats . . . . .	80
One of the <i>Titanic's</i> collapsible boats . . . . .	80
<i>H.M.S. Mauretania</i> in 1918, camouflaged . . . . .	128
Captain Rostron, with Mr. and Mrs. Ogden, who took the photographs of the <i>Titanic's</i> boats . . . . .	176
Captain Rostron congratulated by Mr. Cotterell, South- ampton manager of the Cunard Line, after record voyage to Cherbourg . . . . .	212
<i>R.M.S. Berengaria</i> . . . . .	240



# HOME FROM THE SEA

## CHAPTER I

### GOOD-BYE TO THE SEA

COMING into port always brings a thrill which a thousand repetitions cannot stale. Especially when it is home port!

I remember during sailing-ship days the excitement of making port following months during which we had never once seen land; yet to the last occasion, when under my command a modern liner edged to its berth, the glamour never faded. My first docking—as an apprentice in a clipper—was in San Francisco after a voyage of one hundred and sixty-five days, during which we had been blown by terrible storms far into the Antarctic; the last was the *Berengaria* arriving in Southampton on time.

What an enormous, nearly unbelievable, span of progress is the space between those first and last voyages—and what a wealth of happenings and memories mark the interval! More than a score of ships have been home to me and now the sea and ships are but a memory. And of those vessels the pride must always be the *Mauretania*, the Cunarder that held the Blue Riband of the Atlantic so long;



## HOME FROM THE SEA

in my eyes the most beautiful liner afloat ; the vessel that seemed a living thing to me ; that never failed.

To show how wonderful she was—and is—I may tell you that there have been occasions when for four consecutive voyages she has crossed the Atlantic from New York to Cherbourg with not a difference of ten minutes in the time between the best and “worst.” Think of it ; imagine yourselves driving a motor-car at thirty miles an hour without stopping all day and all night for nearly a week, doing that on four separate occasions and arriving at the destination with only two, three, or five minutes’ difference. I always did my utmost to arrive so that I could catch the three-fifteen from Southampton to Liverpool. They used playfully to call it the *Rostron Express* and, if by chance, I was not on the platform when the train was due to depart the guard wondered whether, after all, it really *was* Tuesday ! Only once did I miss it. What a sidelight on the reliability of the big ships that nowadays make the Atlantic run ! The *Mauretania* kept a time-table that a railway might envy.

For me, there will be no more goings and comings. I have docked finally in the Home Port and, perhaps, to no other man on earth is it given to appreciate home as greatly as the deep-sea sailor who has spent nearly half a century wandering the Seven Seas. And here, in my shore cabin looking out on the rolling Hampshire Downs (that give the suggestion of some tempestuous sea), come naturally long thoughts of all the voyages that are past. The far-off adventurous trips

## GOOD-BYE TO THE SEA

in the old clipper, *Cedric the Saxon* ; dramatic calls through the ether when some ship in distress has sent out those tragic letters S.O.S.—most sensational of all, that night when I raced the *Carpathia* amid the ice to rescue the *Titanic* survivors ; periods of turmoil such as when I kept the bridge for as long as eight days with but a break of ninety minutes. Old storms blow again through a mind attuned to the past, and, to be sure, I recall many a quiet and pleasant voyage, when, be it said, round my table have gathered some of the most notable men and women of my generation.

There is, perhaps, no more favourable time to see these celebrities at their natural best. For, afloat, the busiest worker is, at least partly, off duty and the camaraderie of life on board ship is proverbial. A man loosens the bonds that customarily hold him, breathes easier, talks with less restraint and shows a side of himself that is often mostly hidden. At my table I have made more friends than most men make. Those chairs have been occupied by the titled, statesmen, writers, scientists, artists, travellers, ambassadors—all men and women who mean much to the world. The deck of such a ship as a Cunarder is, indeed, something of a stage which is trodden by every one who plays any considerable part in the affairs of the nations.

These will step and talk through the pages that follow.

I have heard that climbers, coming down from heights, have but to shut their eyes and live again

## HOME FROM THE SEA

the scenes of the day, retrace the steps they have trodden over rock and ice. In a similar way come back to me millions of miles of sea I have traversed and thousands of persons I have carried—with never a life lost through the ship's cause. That thought brings justification of a simple faith that goes with the sailor, a faith which long ago formed the basis of my philosophy in life—there is a Providence which shapes our ends.

It has guided me, both during the War and in peace, through hours of peril. Let me refer, for instance, to one that comes back out of the riot of 1914-18.

I was in Marseilles on my way to England. My ship then was the *Ivernia* and my sailing time was 2.30 in the afternoon. Just prior to that hour many rumours were current in the port of submarines out in the bay. There was, indeed, no doubt that the enemy were busy outside the harbour. The pilot came to me and said we could not sail.

“My orders are to sail at 2.30,” I told him, “and at that hour we leave.”

We did. Before reaching the Ile d'If, only a mile from the Grande Jetée, we passed a ship flying signals. They informed us she had been chased into harbour by submarines. Our pilot was in haste to be away.

A little farther we found ourselves amid a number of boats carrying the passengers and crew of a ship which had been torpedoed.

I received an official warning of a danger zone several miles in circumference where the enemy had been operating. It lay directly in our course. We

## GOOD-BYE TO THE SEA

kept on, passed over the centre of that zone—and never so much as sighted a periscope. To be sure I had argued that, just as lightning is said never to strike twice in the same spot, so was our proper course at least as safe as any other, though, naturally, we zig-zagged and did a bit of dodging about.

Yet when we were ten miles at sea, news was flashed that, in that same circle of danger we had just crossed, the enemy had struck again and another ship had perished !

Even in peace time we sometimes received news of ships being in trouble, perhaps steering gear damaged in bad weather, or may be that the cargo had shifted, causing anxiety to those on board. The other vessels in the vicinity could render any necessary assistance without fear of enemy attention, weather and sea being the only difficulty.

It is no use saying such news need not cause any anxiety to other ships. It does ; the sailor has his superstitions just as he has his faith. At such times we cannot help worrying until we have reasonable assurance that help is near the unfortunate ship. The Brotherhood of the Sea strikes very deep into the hearts of all Seamen and if we could not give any direct assistance we would broadcast the news to other ships and anxiously await news of the arrival of assistance.

Under a kind Providence I have sailed the seas for forty-six years. Now, in port permanently, I turn the pages of my log and here pass on what seems to me of general interest.

## CHAPTER II

### ADVENTURES IN SAIL

I NEVER had any ambition other than to go to sea. The spirit of adventure must have lived in some remote ancestor and come down to me ; certainly there was in my home no encouragement to set out on long and hazardous trails. Yet at five or six years of age I announced my intention to be a sailor and all that was ever said to dispel that youthful dream—and there was a good deal of quite natural opposition—never had the slightest effect, unless it was to increase my determination.

Yet to go to sea in those days was a far different affair from what it is to-day. True enough, I didn't know what was in store for me, but I did know that it meant sailing ships, and I was to find out that sailing ships meant hard work, sometimes bullying by more or less ignorant officers, great risks and poor food, every sort of discomfort that one can conjure to the imagination. Even as an apprentice on my very first voyage, I knew what it was to be out in cold, miserable nights with the rain coming down in sheets, the wind blowing a gale, with blizzards of snow sweeping us as the ship wallowed, pitched, rolled and laboured in mountainous seas. Sleep,

## ADVENTURES IN SAIL

rest, food, drink—all gone without through long periods when the clipper I was in was doing her noble best to see us through it.

These things, however, were blissfully hidden from me when at length I persuaded my parents to let me join the *Conway*, an old wooden frigate lying in the Mersey. A memorable day was that which saw me first don my cadet's uniform and, with my classmates at the station to bid me farewell, I set off. And at first everything was fascinating. Two years I spent on the *Conway*, leaving at the end of my training as head boy.

I had by that time become a midshipman in the Royal Naval Reserve and got my appointment as an apprentice with Messrs. Williamson, Milligan & Co., of Liverpool, and in March of 1887 I joined the full-rigged clipper ship, *Cedric the Saxon*. I remember that day of joining. It was in Hull and the future beckoned joyously when I found that in the clipper were three other *Conway* boys, one having done two voyages, the others one each. It was a bond between us, naturally, and you may be sure these "seasoned" sailors appeared rather wonderful fellows to me and I drank in all they said of what they had done and seen. I just yearned with boyish enthusiasm for the day of sailing and there was no more excited boy alive than I when at last we got away—bound for San Francisco.

For a month all my anticipations were realized. This was the life; a fine ship, beautiful to watch

## HOME FROM THE SEA

as she ploughed majestically through the waves of the Atlantic, and all the world before me.

But when we reached Lat.  $40^{\circ}$  S. there commenced a three-months' spell of sheer horror, as full of thrills by storm and danger as the most thirstily-adventurous boy could desire. Day after day, night after night, the fiercest weather held; looking back on that period now, it seems as if it was the very mother and father of all storms.

Up aloft for hours on end, very often all through the raging night; six or eight hours on a foreyard trying to furl the foresail, the canvas soaked with rain and sea spray, hard as sheet-iron, until the finger-nails were torn off, leaving raw bleeding wounds; drenched to the skin, oilskins blown to ribbons and sea boots full of water. No clothing that could ever be devised could keep out such rioting elements. For this was winter time in the South Atlantic. If anything could add to the misery of our labouring way, it was the fact that twenty out of the twenty-four hours of day were dark and, under that leaden sky, daylight seemed to bring only a paler night-time.

How many times we boys came down from long hours aloft longing—as one nowadays probably longs for nothing—for just a cup of hot coffee, only to find the galley washed out, so that we had to content ourselves with a drink from the water-cask in our berth and a weevily biscuit to eat.

And then no rest. The reader will, of course, have his mind accustomed to the routine of watch on deck

## ADVENTURES IN SAIL

and watch below. He will imagine that, however heavy and risky the tasks aloft, even in those days there would follow a space when a worn-out sailor could get below and sleep. But on that first voyage of the *Cedric the Saxon*, for those three weary months it was not so.

Half an hour, and it seemed as if always the wind would shift and freshen or fall away and we would be out and aloft again, tugging with all our young might and damaged hands at the ice-hard sails. Pulling, hauling on the braces and halyards, seas tumbling over us, men washed about the deck, sometimes overboard, snow or sleet stinging the face, always the eternal rolling and pitching and the almost constant hurricanes—such was our experience that year down below the Horn. Cape Horn! What memories it brings to those who are old-timers and have rounded it in sail!

“One hand for the owner and one for yourself.” That was an old gag, but when the wind lashes the sail from your grasp, when the ship has to be saved in the face of the bellowing night, no sail can be furled with one hand while the other is devoted to your own safety. No, it is both hands and every muscle of your body given to the job, and glad enough if the stubborn canvas can in the end be mastered. One wonders whether those owners ever realized what titanic labour and risk went to make their dividends? I fear not. And certainly little of the ship’s profits found their way into our pockets!



## HOME FROM THE SEA

That trip we went far out of our course—four hundred miles south of Cape Horn, drifted, pushed, beaten, pulled down into the Antarctic before we found a favourable wind. At last, when we thought we should be blown into the very Polar ice, we got a slant and came ploughing up the globe again, courses, topsails and t'gallants all set. Up we rode out of those long, long nights and murky intervals which were day, thanking our stars that the wind held good. For twenty-two hours we ran before it, then it freshened to hurricane force, seas grew heavier and more dangerous again, great rolling mountains under our stern simply pushed us and passed on, the crests breaking and tumbling and roaring like avalanches. Sail was shortened and we all felt we were headed for fairer weather.

Yet, even as all hands were below for a cup of coffee, disaster sprang upon us.

“Pooped !”

The old mate literally bellowed it as that tremendous following sea rose towering over the stern and—crash !—came down full upon us, remorseless, murderously mad.

Away went the wheel together with the senior apprentice and the sailor who were steering. The ship broached to, simply staggered broadside to the waves, every stitch of canvas that was set breaking with the sound of gunshots from the bolt ropes and trailing out on the wind and the sea ! There was one heart-fearing minute. While no one could do any-

## ADVENTURES IN SAIL

thing, that mammoth comber swirled along the decks burying her entirely, and on the fearsome tide those two men were washed, utterly helpless. Fortunately they were caught in the fore part of the poop and regained their feet unhurt, but the wheel was unshipped and that meant that the vessel was for the time out of control.

First the helm was lashed, then half the crew was ordered aloft, the remainder on deck bracing the yards round to the wind, trying to clear the braces washing about the decks and overboard, clewing up the sails—a nightmare, during which every man worked his soul-casing bare to save the ship.

For many back-breaking hours every man slaved, and it is as well in such times that there is little chance to think. But at the back of every one's mind, in that secret place we call our subconsciousness, was the knowledge that any one minute of those long hours might have been our last. At the end we looked at each other literally surprised to find the ship was afloat and we were still alive. And, be it added, that day I saw fear in the eyes of men and found it no pretty sight.

The old mate heartened us whenever he could make himself heard above the howling storm and raging seas.

“If we've got to die, let's die like men.”

His inspiring call comes across the years to my memory now. Certainly, each man gave every ounce that was in him and, at last, the crew were splicing the main-brace with much licking of lips and a feeling of thankfulness that we had come through it.

## HOME FROM THE SEA

I guess no one was more pleased than one of my fellow-apprentices when it was over. Just before the wheel had carried away he had fallen to the deck from the slings (middle) of the main-yard. It was a fifty-foot drop and he was badly hurt. He had been carried to the saloon so that the captain—who, of necessity, was also surgeon—might attend to him. Then came the moment when we were pooped. Torrents of water poured down to the saloon and that boy was helpless, washed about the floor and rolled in agony up against table and bulkhead, among chairs and anything that could get adrift. There he was forced to remain unattended since the entire crew was waging a great fight to save the ship. Not until the storm was over was there a chance of doctoring his hurt.

After that we laid to for thirty hours or so while the wheel was repaired and new sail bent ; then, with the wind moderated, we shaped course for San Francisco. By the time we reached harbour we had cleaned that ship of all the Horn had done to her. With new rigging, new sails, new paint, she put into port taut and trim, looking a credit to officers, crew—and owners.

One vision has often recurred to my mind when I think back to that eventful voyage. It was when we were labouring somewhere in the latitude of Cape Horn itself. We were being blown south then, carried over immense seas in the clutch of a gale that brought with it penetrating, heart-freezing snow squalls. As

## ADVENTURES IN SAIL

we pitched like a cork and all hands aloft were struggling to furl sail, out of the murky smother about us we saw flares burning. We were passing another ship in dire distress, worse, far worse, than we were. I often wonder what happened to her ; we never knew who she was or what her fate. It looked as though she writhed in her death throes, there within a cable's length of us. And we could do nothing. I was on the foreyard as she came out of the night and, while I looked, she faded back into oblivion. We knew we should indeed be lucky if we could save ourselves ; nothing could be done to aid our fellows.

It makes one think. Sometimes when I have glanced at that terribly long list of missing ships I wonder whether her name is somewhere upon it. "Lost with all hands." Is there any other sentence more full of drama, more instinct with suffering and final terror ?

On that voyage we saw land only once in one hundred and sixty-five days and that was between two snow squalls off Staten Island near the Horn ; the next sight was of the headlands that guard the beautiful harbour of 'Frisco. It was, of course, an unusually bad trip, but the Horn in winter is never a pleasure cruise, even to-day. To the men in the old windjammers it brought many discomforts and not least among these were the salt-water boils, horrible things with cores the size of one's little finger. Often half the crew was down with them and it was impossible then for a man to work. They are painful

## HOME FROM THE SEA

and distressing and are caused by the chaffing of wet and hard oilskins on the wrists and arms—there being no chance of washing off the salt with fresh water.

After discharging our cargo—railroad rails, for in those days England supplied most of the rails for the rest of the world—we loaded grain for Queenstown and eventually reached Liverpool, having been away nearly twelve months.

My second voyage was again to 'Frisco in the *Cedric* with new captain and officers. Six and a half months it took us on that occasion to reach the Golden Gate, for, when off the Rio Plata, we got a real snorter, were disabled and had to put back to Rio for repairs. Those took four weeks to effect, but that was the only happening of importance and once again we made Queenstown, where we got orders for Liverpool.

The third and last voyage I made as an apprentice was to India with a full cargo of salt, and I hoped then never to sail with the holds full of salt again. After a few weeks the salt began to drain and we were constantly at the pumps!

But we made the Hooghly at length and arrived at Calcutta where midsummer was reigning with its heat, its mosquitoes and its fevers.

In the river between the open sea and the great city lie the Jane and Mary shoals which sometimes lure an honest ship to her doom. Well named they are, and, alas, they have their human counterparts in every port—Janes and Marys waiting like ghouls to trap the simple sailor.

## ADVENTURES IN SAIL

I often think the average Briton does not realize how much he is dependent on the men who go down to the sea in ships. As an essentially maritime nation we take the work of the merchant service very much for granted, though if it suddenly ceased to function, the country's heart would cease to beat. Even the average man is inclined to look down upon the ordinary sailor. Certainly, to these Janes and Marys he is always considered fair game—which means a likely victim for any sort of dirty work that will bring them profit. Harpies and sharks are waiting in every port. With friendly word and false smiles they meet these sailors, who, maybe, have been long out of sight of land, who are fresh from hardships, hunger and other miseries that follow in the wake of the eternal fight against nature in its most tempestuous moods. The sailor as a class is a simple and trusting fellow and, with his pay in his pocket and eyes dazed a bit by the almost-forgotten glitter of port life, he easily falls prey to these emissaries of Satan. He is lured into their parlours, sometimes to die, always to be robbed, often to be beaten, filled with loathsome liquor and, alas, not infrequently with disease.

In those days the sailors' boarding-houses were just as bad. After all his money was taken from him, a sailor was "sold" and shipped on board some outward-bounder, doped or drunk, given a handful of dunnage as a kit, only to wake to find his next two months' money had been paid to the dock-runner who had also received from £3 to £5 as blood-money. In

## HOME FROM THE SEA

America—California particularly—a captain would pay forty dollars for each shanghaied seaman.

And the skipper was lucky if he got a seaman. Often the man thrown helpless on deck had never so much as seen a ship before. Many were just farm hands, shop assistants, any poor fellows, young or not, foolish enough to listen to the blandishments of the harpies and the sharks who spent their lives looking out for such simpletons. It is easy for even the uninitiated to imagine the sort of life that followed when the unconscious man came to his senses miles at sea, ill from the effects of the dope or drink and made worse by the unaccustomed motion of the ship, put to do a scientific job he knew nothing about under officers whose patience was soon outraged and whose need of help drove them to wild abuse.

I remember one voyage when, in 'Frisco, a day before sailing, several men were sent off, dead to the world ; we were lying to an anchor in the bay. One of these men was more or less conscious next day and came aft to interview the captain. He had a pretty story of how he had been kidnapped and, when half doped, had been told that the best thing he could do would be to amuse the captain. He could play the banjo it appeared and, indeed, he had a banjo with him. One was inclined to be sorry for the man, thinking he was just another of the many who had been robbed and duped.

But before we sailed our opinion changed. The police boarded us and our banjoist left in their custody.

He had joined the kidnapped party in order to hide from justice.

Two of that same crowd were cowboys, actually never having seen a ship before. Poor fellows, they had come to town for a spree and been shanghaied.

Times have changed since then, though that notion of a sailor being fair game lingers in many a port. The status of the sailor has risen—and nothing has raised it more than the interest shown by the King, who was responsible for the service now being officially known as “The Merchant Navy.”

To go back to Calcutta. We left for Port Pirie in Australia and there loaded grain for Queenstown, and of that voyage I have two unhappy memories. One is that I met with my first accident, falling from aloft to the deck on my back, though without any too serious results. But the other occurrence was a more prolonged distress!

Three weeks after leaving Australia the steward found he had finished the biscuits and nearly all the flour. That was pretty hard on us and the fact that it showed almost criminal carelessness on his and the captain's part didn't relieve our concern as to food, biscuits (hard tack) being the principal diet on sailing vessels at that time.

As I said, we were loaded with wheat and some one unearthed an old coffee-grinder on board. The crew took turns to put the grain through the grinder—result, cracked wheat. With this the cook tried to make bread, but it was a long way removed from the



## HOME FROM THE SEA

real thing. If hot, one could eat it, tasteless as straw though it was ; but when it went cold it was as hard as a brick. Indeed, we sailed eventually into Queens-town with several specimens hung as a necklace around the figure-head ! We tried turning it into a sort of porridge and again when hot we could just stomach it, but if cold it could not be touched. We had three months of that, and we had to pull in our belts until there wasn't very much of us left for the belt to go round ! Perhaps it was a consciousness of his carelessness that inspired the captain, when at last we did reach port, to hustle ashore and send off a quarter of beef, some fresh vegetables and—strange and welcome luxury—bread. Did we enjoy it ? I think we did nothing at all save eat and sleep for three days. Since we went across to St. Nazaire in France for a couple of weeks, I had fed well before I returned home and so I received nothing but good-humoured laughter when I told my people how I had literally starved for three months.

“ Look at yourself in the glass,” they told me. And certainly I was fit enough by then. Apprentices to-day don't go through the mill like we did, but, looking back on it all, I fancy it was a healthy life and fitted us for the exposures and the trials that were to come. But, Jove ! there were days on that voyage home from Australia when I felt a lion gnawing inside me and you can imagine it was good to have a shore existence for a month while I passed for second mate.

## ADVENTURES IN SAIL

It was in that capacity I next went to sea—with the same firm but in another ship. This was an old-timer, a barque well known in her day, named the *Redgauntlet*. I was to get five pounds a month and thought myself fortunate. I would have gone for three pounds, so little did I think of money and so keen was I to get on. I wanted my first mate's ticket, then my master's. That seemed the topmost peak of success. I should be a made man then. Ah well, innocence and youth are good bed-fellows.

I think the outstanding fact about the first voyage in the *Redgauntlet* was that it took only ten and a half months, which, therefore, was short of the necessary year at sea to enable me to sit for my mate's certificate, and so I had to sail again as second. All the other officers were new, but the captain and mate were old shipmates from the *Cedric*, so the company was pleasant.

Having rounded the Cape of Good Hope I'm afraid we got south too soon to run our easting down and found ourselves among the icebergs. For three days we were with these cold monsters that are so beautiful to look at and so dangerous to touch, but we had a good fair westerly breeze and were able to keep our distance. Before reaching Adelaide we experienced a most wonderful electrical storm. I have never since seen its equal. For six hours the flashes were so vivid as to be awe-inspiring, constant and blinding. We were not surprised to hear later that in Adelaide they had experienced unusual heat, heat so intense,

indeed, that it peeled the paper from the walls of the houses.

In Newcastle, New South Wales, we took on coal for Valparaiso and it was when we were south of New Zealand on that run that we had the nearest shave of going down that any one of us aboard had encountered.

It was my first watch—8 to 12 p.m.—and during that time the wind freshened considerably. So I gave orders for the royals to be taken in and this had been accomplished when at midnight the first mate came to relieve me. I told him what I had done, explaining the rising wind, and went below.

Only a few minutes afterwards I heard the voice of the first mate yelling out the order :

“Loose the royals !”

Well, it was not my responsibility, but I was not greatly pleased to think that they had been set again. That wind was threatening, to my view. I turned in rather disturbed.

Half an hour later it came—a real southerly buster. Over she went to a sickening angle and out on deck it seemed as though a company of heavy artillery had started a barrage. All hands were roused, but before they could reach deck she had been swept clean. The *Redgauntlet* had been caught almost aback and every sail was carried away in that first terrible burst of wind. Great seas rose and, as the ship heeled until her rail was under, the cargo shifted. We were as near on our beam ends as was safe with the lee lower yard-arms dipping in the water.

## ADVENTURES IN SAIL

The night was pitch-black ; you couldn't see a thing a yard away ; the seas were constantly sweeping over us while up aloft we clambered trying to furl the tattered sails. They ripped out of the bolt ropes and waved with the sound of a thousand whips cracking. The wind howled and shrieked like a million demons, angry that that first onslaught had not sent the ship to the bottom. The vessel groaned and moaned in every plank and, added to the cacophony, was the whistling rigging. Every man was surprised to find the old barque right herself time after time and not a man but wondered how long she could withstand the fury of the gale.

And when at long last we had snugged her down as best we could, I remember coming down and finding, owing to the list caused by the shifted cargo, the lee-rail washed away and the lee-side of the deck under water up to the hatches.

Then for three days we had the heart-breaking job of trimming that cargo of coal over to windward in order to right the ship. Our watch on deck was occupied in repairing and bending new sails and clearing away wreckage ; half our watch below we were trimming coal in the 'tween decks. Mighty thankful for small mercies in such desperate conditions, we rejoiced, even as we laboured, that the weather moderated so that, when the cargo was at length trimmed, we were able to make good progress under fair conditions.

From Valparaiso—how different a place it is to-day

## HOME FROM THE SEA

from then, when that open drain ran down the centre of the main square!—we made a short leg up the Pacific coast to Guayacan and here, before we got through the bottle-neck into the small bay, we had another “touch and go.”

We arrived about six miles off, in early morning, and then the wind fell away to a dead calm. But though no breeze stirred the sea there was quite a heavy swell. About three miles off, some pinnacle rocks reared their heads fifty or sixty feet out of the water. The swell and the current set us towards those rocks and the danger of striking them grew so imminent that we put out our boats in the endeavour to tow the ship clear. It was hopeless. The boats were hoisted in again and there was nothing to do save watch those rocks gradually approaching. All morning the space between lessened until about one o'clock we were only a few feet from them, rising and falling so near their jagged edges that we could have touched them with a pole.

A pilot had come on board, but neither he nor anyone could do a thing to assure our safety. Only a breeze could save us. And it came, just a hint of a breeze! Madly we sheeted the mainsail and foresail flat and, trimming the yards, we crawled away with sighs of relief, standing in for the rocky coast. Even then it was a ticklish business making the bay, piloted through a mere crack in the cliffs, deep enough for the ship, but so narrow that the yard-arms almost touched the cliffs on either side as we crept into a pond of a

harbour. We lay there snug enough for a time and hoped that the Pacific would show a more friendly face when next we set out for another port. Those hopes were realized, for when, once again, after many days we steered through that crack in the cliffs and faced the ocean, she greeted us in gay mood and bowled us along by fair winds as far as Portland, Oregon, our next place of call.

As long ago as then the salmon-canning industry was in full swing and we saw thousands and thousands of fish landed as we were towed by a stern-wheeler up the river ; and, by the way, it was here that I had my second accident, falling down the hold again on to my back. Still no permanent results, thanks be.

So as Pepys didn't quite say, home to—Plymouth. Yet, once more on that rather eventful voyage, not without a further close shave. We were within sight of home when it happened and had passed the Bishops—Scilly Isles—when a nasty south-east gale sprang up. It increased as we passed the Lizard and a pitch-black night descended upon us. Under the pressure of the gale wallowing in heavy seas, we missed the Eddystone by what seemed like inches, and was indeed but a few fathoms. Our final scrape. Daylight saw us bearing well away and making for Plymouth where we picked up our tow and got safely to berth.

So ended my first voyage round the world. It had taken eighteen months and we had had at least three narrow escapes. Once or twice we wondered whether we had a Jonah on board or whether there really was

## HOME FROM THE SEA

something in the fact that we had set sail on a Friday. But if Jonah there was, we felt as we moored there was also a Providence shaping our ends, and none was ashamed to show thankfulness that his feet were once more on native soil.

I was at home now for two months, during which time I passed for first mate and in that capacity I joined the barque *Camphill*, then lying in Antwerp.

We had a very cosmopolitan crew. I didn't like the look of them and on the voyage my fears were realized. After passing the River Plate in the South Atlantic we saw little of the captain ; he became very fond of his cabin—and its contents ! The weather grew worse and so did the captain's complaint, leaving myself and the second mate, a youngster of twenty-one, on our own to carry on. It was then the crew showed a bad spirit. I was only twenty-four then, and I suppose some of the hard cases among the crew didn't like being under two such young officers. Anyhow, they swore, seriously enough, to knife me before we reached Valparaiso, which was our destination. I quite understood that this was no jest, and in consequence for weeks I carried a revolver, even sleeping with it under my pillow. Never did I approach a man, or let him approach me, unless I was armed. I suppose they became aware of my preparedness ; at all events we reached Valparaiso without anyone being knifed or shot.

But there had been other anxieties that voyage. While we had been loading cargo at Antwerp we were

informed that three ships carrying similar cargo and bound for Valparaiso had been lost during the previous twelve months. That dangerous cargo consisted of forty tons of dynamite and forty tons of powder stored at opposite corners in the 'tween decks. Previous disasters did not bring any sense of comfort, and you can be sure I kept a wary eye on that cargo. All went well—fourth time evidently was lucky—and we unloaded the stuff safely.

The crew was paid off and glad I was to see the back of them, but we signed on a new lot which looked just as bad. The beachcombers in those days on the West Coast were a pretty sad lot of human flotsam. We went up to Pisagua, in Chile, to load nitrate, and a nice job it was, as we had to lie to an anchor in the bay while the nitrate was conveyed alongside in lighters towed by our ship's boats. By the way, it was surprisingly all stowed by one old man. He didn't look as if he could lift twenty pounds, and yet he handled every single bag and each weighed a hundred.

There was a custom on the coast in those days which brings back to mind that day of sailing in the *Camphill*. The habit was for the captains of all ships lying in harbour to be invited on board on sailing day, and a really convivial party took place. While the captain of the departing ship was entertaining his guests, one of the visiting captains would take the vessel a few miles out to sea, where farewells would be exchanged and the guests pull back to their own ships.

The usual party took place on the *Camphill* and while



## HOME FROM THE SEA

our old skipper was enjoying the compliments of his guests one of the latter came to take us out to sea.

He made a poor job of it. Perhaps in addition to light winds that day there was in charge of us a light head. I don't know, but, when we had catted the anchor, that skipper seemed bent on piling us up. Maybe he thought the shore was a mirage, or he could not distinguish between land and sea, but surely we were driving straight for disaster. Seeing what was happening and not relishing the entertainment, I let go the anchor and gave orders to clew up all sail. Only just in time.

Was our guest pleased that I had saved the ship? He was not. Indeed, he grew very indignant at what he called my unwarrantable interference and stamped below to persuade our own captain to have me hauled up before the lot of them. Below I went and was faced with an impromptu court of inquiry. You may be sure I was a bit annoyed at the whole proceeding—to be blamed for saving the ship from going aground—and I spoke my mind pretty straight. I threatened officially to log the whole performance with the names of all captains present and their ships. They blustered a bit, but several of them, a little more clear-headed possibly than the majority—my own captain among them—thought it better to let the “inquiry” drop there and then. The turmoil ceased and the captains departed and so, after twenty-four hours' delay and without any further “assistance,” we managed to kedge our ship into deep water and, setting sail, left ;

## ADVENTURES IN SAIL

our imperious guests still shaking fists at me as we passed, and bellowing threats of what they would do to me when they arrived in England. Poor beggars. Of course nothing more was heard of it.

It was summer-time off the Horn that voyage and with decent weather we made a fair passage home. Truly the *Campbill* was no clipper but, with a gale on her quarter, she could do her thirteen knots, though it made the poor thing gasp and puff a lot; she seemed thoroughly surprised at her own accomplishment. Our skipper's "internal troubles" greatly improved as we neared home and when his wife came down to meet him as we berthed in Liverpool he was himself again.

I had my last stand-up fight with a sailor that voyage. We were lying in Queenstown Harbour, and this particular member of the crew was not doing his work properly. I had to speak to him about it and he grew impertinent. I called him on deck and asked him what he meant speaking to me as he had done and, instead of showing any signs of regret, he only became more abusive. There was nothing for it. An officer dare not let a man take the upper hand or all discipline is gone. So I prepared to knock some respect into the fellow. He was a hefty man and I was lithe enough, but he got in one blow first. It sent me spinning thirty feet along the deck but, fortunately, I kept my feet and was instantly back at him. That was his one and only blow. I never gave him another chance. Nowhere near his size, I

## HOME FROM THE SEA

was under his lashing arms and all round him, and in the end he had had enough, returning to his work in better mood. A fight like that seldom left bad blood, so long as it was a clean scrap. It was better than logging a man; more effective, too, since he would only desert at the first opportunity and all the time until then you had to keep your weather eye open as you were dealing with a man who, with a threat over him, felt he was suffering from a grievance.

CHAPTER III  
INTO STEAM

IT is, perhaps, a trite thing to say, but on what little turns our fortunes often hang ! When the *Camphill* docked I was a mere six weeks short of the necessary time afloat for me to pass as master. Otherwise I should have taken command of that vessel, and I wonder now how different my career would have been ! The owners wanted me to take over and did everything they could to fill in the time, but we couldn't manage it and so perforce I left her in order to get my time in. You will understand that I was not anxious to go another long voyage just to get in the necessary six weeks—I was too keen to get my master's ticket. So I joined a small Glasgow steamer of a thousand tons called the *River Avon*. My first experience in steam.

What a change ! No sails to watch, no worry when the wind shifted, regular meals, regular watches. But she was a bug-infested old tub, and I was not sorry when, after knocking about the Spanish coast and through the Straits to the Mediterranean, we came home and I was paid off in Ipswich.

I passed as extra master and that year spent Christmas with my people at home.

Well, here I was, qualified to take command, and I remembered my youthful ambitions and how I had imagined at such a moment in my life I should be a "made" man. Instead, I was in Liverpool without a ship. Even up to six months previous I had sworn I would never go into steam. Steam was no sort of job for a real sailor! It was for the worn-out, the decrepit, the soft-hearted. Yet here was I wondering whether I couldn't wangle command of a tramp! Those youthful ambitions of mine had always visualized a windjammer; that was the life for a man who wanted to follow the sea. And with all the hardships that had come my way I loved the life.

I wonder whether shore people ever pause to imagine what it is to be months at a time with thirty-odd men, including captain and officers, in the narrow confines of a comparatively small vessel surrounded by the ocean in all its moods. Long days of glassy calm and warm water in the tropics with a blazing red-hot furnace of a sun beating down. Other times with the ocean heaved up into mountains of water—cold at that—tumbling and roaring, each sea seemingly bent on overwhelming the ship.

In mild trade-wind weather the sails are set and the yards trimmed for days at a time with only the "dog watch" setting taut as necessary. The ship bowls along steadily and, if homeward bound, every man aboard is counting the days until the lights of home loom up over the weather bow.

## INTO STEAM

Or we are in the Doldrums with a baffling wind, the ship rolling about in an aimless manner, sails flapping against the mast one minute, bellying out to a tantalizing gust of wind the next, calling for constant trimming of the yards.

Or again the ship is wallowing through tempestuous weather off the Horn. The men are never dry, knocking about to the waist in icy water that comes tumbling on board, carried off their feet and washed about the decks. Perhaps there is snow, maybe fog. There are sure to be hours up aloft when one is so cold as to be almost lifeless, the only feeling that a fall into one of those dark caverns between the breaking crests of sea would be a welcome harbour of refuge from the misery that has to be endured for days, weeks and sometimes months on end. No steam heat, no fireside, no gas or electric lamps, only an old swinging oil lamp in one's cabin usually smelly and smoky; and yet the cabin is a little heaven out of the whipping storm even if the icicles hang from the roof and the temperature ten or fifteen below freezing-point.

A hard life, yet when we lay in 'Frisco sometimes I would not stray fifty yards from the ship, though Market Street was right opposite; I was perfectly happy and content where I was—on board with my job. For one thing, beer was not to my taste, and as for the other "attractions" of life in port, they had no lure for me.

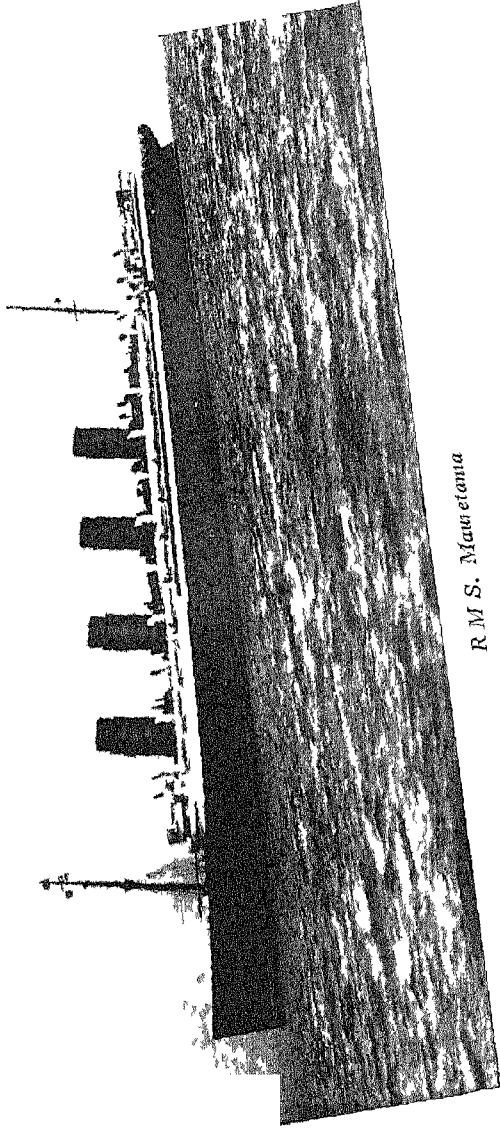
Yet I was thinking of steam that day in Liverpool.

## HOME FROM THE SEA

But I was not to get command so soon. All the same it proved an occasion of great importance for me since it was then that I received orders to report to the General Superintendent of the Cunard Line. That was, in fact, the first rung of the ladder which led at length to the bridge of the *Berengaria* with the Commodore's flag flying from her mast-head.

My first Cunarder was the *Umbria*, and she was to sail on a certain Saturday. I had to join by tender, leaving the landing-stage at 7.30 a.m. I remember I couldn't find that tender—she was stowed away in some cosy corner. So I hired a waterman's boat to pull me out to where the liner lay at her buoy in the Sloyne—Mersey. A junior officer joining up in that fashion was quite novel to the Chief Officer, and he was aghast and wondered what the service was coming to when a clean-shaven youngster of my age had the impudence to resort to such unusual and un-Cunardlike methods. It took a few minutes and a disarming smile or two to smooth the old gentleman's ruffled feelings, but these succeeded. And from that moment I was able to call myself a Cunarder.

That first trip in a liner was a winter crossing of the Atlantic and brought me a new experience. We bore into the heavy seas and I was staggered at the speed that was maintained in spite of the damage the weather was causing to the ship. But in those days speed was the be-all and 'end-all of the crack ships. Competition was won with speed and I



*R M S. Mauretania*





have known cases when damage amounting to a five-figure total has been occasioned in a few minutes because speed would not be reduced. It was the chase for greater and greater speed that occasioned bigger and bigger ships to be built. Comfort even was made a secondary consideration. Steamers were driven for all they were worth. Sailing ships, too. Tales were told of wonderful voyages ; yes, and tales there were when ships chasing that bogy of high speed were lost or dismasted. They were seamen and sailors who made those runs ; to carry them through meant marvels of seamanship and navigation. But after a time it was naturally found that the account for damages rose to such giddy proportions as not to warrant the outlay.

Speed is still necessary to-day ; speed is still advertised, and quite rightly. But the Cunard policy is summed up in this slogan—Safety, Comfort, Speed. This does not quite mean that speed is only a third consideration, but that it must never overrule safety and that it must not interfere with the comfort of passengers. Go for all you are worth when you can ; go just as fast as you safely can when you are up against it—that is to-day's creed. But when I first crossed the Atlantic in a liner ships would run up bills of thousands for damages in order to save a few hours.

Five times I crossed in the *Umbria* and then learned that I was not eligible for promotion, so I left and

## HOME FROM THE SEA

once more went back into sail, actually rejoining the old *Cedric*, this time as first mate.

Antwerp to 'Frisco in 130 odd days—a good passage with a decent slant round our old friend the Horn, it being the end of winter. Not that a decent slant means we did not have the usual misery, cold, wet, up aloft for hours beating about in heavy seas and stiff gales. All that was on the programme, but there was a certain ease to my job since, remember, I was now first mate with a cabin to myself and messed in the saloon. Those things make a difference between times of stress and messy work—in which, let me say, I was always up to the neck, for I loved the old ship and my work; wanted to be a hundred per cent. sailorman and, when leadership and encouragement were required, I never thought of being anywhere save with my men.

I remember the days we made the Horn coming home that voyage. A glorious summer morning. It had been light all night; I actually tried to read a newspaper at midnight just to make sure that the old tag had some truth in it. I found I could read it quite well. We had a fresh gale on our port quarter as dawn showed us the Horn twenty miles away and with all sail set we came bowling along grandly, fifteen to sixteen knots. Beating round to westward was a ship under goose-winged lower topsails, reefed foresail with fore topmast stay-sail set. We passed him a couple of miles to leeward of us and he must have thought us the *Flying Dutch-*

*man*, the ghost ship which was supposed to terrify poor sailors in those latitudes. At any rate, he must have envied us.

We made a fair passage home and were towed at length into East India Dock, which afforded me my first view of old Father Thames and the port of London. There we were paid off and I went back to the Cunard.

And if the Fates who guide our ways had decided that I must remain with the *Cedric*, this story would not have been written. She was lost. Lost with all hands. The news came with a shock, for she was a gallant ship and had been my home for over four years. And my skipper perished with her—he had been the only one to remain with her when, after our return from 'Frisco, she had been sold to new owners.

He took her to New York from London River and then sailed with cases of petroleum for Batavia. She was never seen again. News came later that she had been burnt at sea. Fire, with a cargo of petroleum in cases; imagine it! What an end to so fine a ship!

She was a beautiful model, taut and trim as a yacht. Truly a clipper ship. I've known her reel off eighteen knots in a squall with every stitch set. Dare not start a halyard—she just heeled over to it and clipped off the knots. She made one wonderful passage out to Calcutta and another from Calcutta to Australia. These were before I joined her, but I was on board

## HOME FROM THE SEA

when she ran 325 miles (nautical) in 22 hours with a hard gale blowing under our stern and heavy seas running.

Few men to-day know what it is to be on board a sailing ship making such runs. They come back to my mind—outstanding hours of thrill and that sort of joy that goes with high accomplishment.

Here's the old *Cedric* with a gale urging her through the mountains of sea. The wind shrieks in the rigging, there is a low booming noise as the sails hold the wind. The spars are groaning and moaning—or should I call it singing?—the boiling, foaming water swishes past, occasionally flinging a hissing crest over the rail. Is there anywhere a more inspiring sight?

There's not much comfort on board and every one—especially captain and officers—are keyed up to the highest pitch, watching every sail, every rope, on constant look out for change of wind or any sign indicating a weak spot in mast, yard, sail or rope. The helmsman, taut of nerve, knows that one moment's lapse, the wrong turn of a spoke or two of the wheel, might easily bring every mast and yard tumbling to the deck and make a complete wreck of the ship. It's a man's job, with eyes and ears alert, listening to some unusual sound that may portend trouble, ready on the instant to give such orders as shall circumvent accident.

A man's job!

See her again when the call goes out:

“Lee fore brace.”

Every sailor knows what that means, but never a shore person can imagine it.

Say we are rounding the Horn in winter. The fore-braces lead forward to a hard weather pin rail or else to the top of the deck-house. This is so that one or two men can be on the tail end to take a turn of the brace over a stout belaying pin, the remainder on deck pulling on the braces. The men at the tail end take in the slack over the pin and hold on for all they are worth. They know full well that a slack or missed turn over that pin might throw the men hauling on deck from their feet—perhaps to be washed over-board. Remember, it may be a pitch-black night with the ship labouring, decks deep with water washing from side to side and, as she pitches, seas pour over the lee-rail burying the men who are hanging on to the rope for their lives. One false move and the whole of the rhythm of the work is broken ; men would stumble, caught very likely by a cataract and hurled wherever that torrent of water takes them.

“Lee fore brace !” Gad, imagination runs riot at the words, but a good sailor is proud that he has been through it and done it. No toffee fingers about the sailor’s job. He hangs on with fingers, nails, almost, one might say, with a spare eyelash, and then escapes but by the skin of his teeth.

And speaking of hanging on reminds me of occasions when a little argument up aloft has led to blows.

## HOME FROM THE SEA

That takes me back to the days of apprenticeship. Perhaps a boy had a few words with a man while on deck, walking round the capstan or clewing up a sail, only to find that the occasion has rankled in the manly breast so that he has taken advantage of one's precarious hold up aloft to get revenge, and there would be blows while one had to hold on to a becket on the yard or else the jack-stay with one hand, using the other for pugilistic purposes. One is standing on a foot rope at such times with the deck seventy feet below and, if the ship is labouring, a fall would find you overboard, most likely on a black night at that. And in those days a knife would sometimes flash quickly and strike, if the sailor hailed from certain countries where they make a habit of using knives.

These encounters can only be indulged during a pause when you have furled your bit of sail and wait for the men inside you to lay in. When they lay down from above, the scrappers needs must leave their scrapping unfinished, but you must keep a wary eye open, for you could never put it past some of the fellows to trip you up.

With that picture of the *Cedric* bowling along through the waves under the urge of the gale, I can leave my adventures in sail. From then onwards it was steam for me, and though once I had been inclined to look askance at the modern liner as not a sailor's job, I had to confess that there was something to be said, after the wild days and wilder nights in a windjammer, for a comfortable cabin, a warm

## INTO STEAM

bunk, steam heat, and electric light, not to mention good food and as much of it as you wanted. No longer were we at the mercy of wind and waves; the elements might be unkind and give us a shake-up, but the steamers were able to laugh at everything. There were to be times when we arrived in New York coated in ice and with six inches of ice covering the whole harbour, but the Cunarders could stand up to that and cut their way through like a knife cutting bread.

But before entering on the long unbroken career as a Cunarder I had to get leave to do my naval courses. Immediately I left the *Cedric* I joined the old *Aurania* as third officer, did a couple of voyages across the Atlantic, was promoted to extra second and after one trip in that capacity, went to Portsmouth and joined what is known as H.M.S. *Excellent*, but which is really large and comfortable naval barracks on Whale Island—"Whaley" for short.

No need to go into the details of the seventeen months of that training. It took me out to the China station and, to be sure, had its interests, humorous as well as serious. I laugh now at one episode that recurs to my mind. It was aboard the *Iphigenia* and the men possessed a pet in the unwieldy shape of a bear. One lunch-time a Japanese bum-boat came alongside the crew gangway in the waist. A Japanese, with very brown bare legs and feet, was just coming aboard when the bear spotted him and apparently liked the look of him, thinking



## HOME FROM THE SEA

evidently he was a new toy to play with. He gambolled after him and the Jap took to flight. The men were soon watching an interesting race—the Jap ahead, the bear close on his padding heels. All over the deck they went and eventually the man jumped for his boat. So did the bear. The pet seemed to think, from the laughter of the crew, that he was highly popular and, going into the boat, began to paw everything. An omelet attracted his attention and he picked it up, but immediately dropped it like the proverbial hot brick. In revenge for hurt paws, he up-ended the charcoal fire in the boat and ambled back to his quarters amid the delighted cheers of the crew—not to mention the smiles of the officers.

At last I was ordered to join the *Pique* for passage home, but while we were at dinner one evening in Hong Kong a message came through from the Commander-in-Chief for us to proceed with all speed to Iloilo to protect British lives and interests. A blank stare of astonishment went round the mess. Where on earth was Iloilo? No one had ever heard of it, and we had to study the charts. Next day we were steaming for the southern shores of the Philippines. The American-Spanish war was on. It was all quiet at Iloilo and we were ordered to Manila. That sounded interesting; perhaps we should see something. Having obtained permission to enter the harbour—the American fleet under Admiral Dewey was cruising about outside—we found the entire

Spanish fleet had been sunk inside only a few days previously. There were a good many tales as to how it had happened, but you know the Spanish have a useful word—*mañana*. It means “to-morrow,” and the Spaniards had a way of putting everything off until that elusive day.

We put back to Hong Kong carrying long-delayed mails, and sailed for home, leaving a much augmented fleet in Gulf of Pechili, as England had been expecting trouble with Russia. Every ship was cleared for action and we were all on the *qui vive*, watching Port Arthur, Wei-hai-Wei being taken over a week or so after I left. But on the way to Suez we did get another glimpse of the Philippine war, passing the last efforts of old Spain to send out a fleet to meet Admiral Dewey. Just as well those fleets never met; it would have been another Manila, only perhaps not so conveniently situated for the Spaniards—in harbour. Think of it—the U.S.A. with millions of splendid young men and untold wealth and power, and poor old Spain . . . ! It would have been suicide if they had sought a fight.

At home again I donned my Cunard uniform for the third time, going as extra second on the *Aurania*, and on the very first return voyage we lost our one and only propeller !

We were a hundred miles west of the Fastnet, but fortunately it was pleasant August weather, with a comfortable sea and a light breeze. Of course, at that time there was no wireless, and all we could do

## HOME FROM THE SEA

was to await the arrival of some ship. After two days a small tramp hove in sight, and we were ignominiously towed into Queenstown by a vessel one-fifth our size. We had been unable to communicate our condition to shore until we could signal Cape Clear, and had to lie in Queenstown for two days to await the arrival of good Liverpool tugs to take us home.

And that reminds me of a really epic tow, which was by no means so simple a matter. Once the *Mauretania* herself was towed across the Channel from Southampton to Cherbourg.

She had been laid up in Southampton for engine repairs. The covers of the turbines had been lifted in order to do a lot of reblading and then the workmen struck! For a considerable time not a stroke was done and the Company were getting anxious as the summer season was approaching. There appeared, however, no way of settling the dispute and, with the covers lifted and the ship helpless, it looked as though the workmen had the whip-hand.

To their consternation one day five foreign tugs appeared in Southampton Water, and the news went round that they had come to tow the vessel across to Cherbourg, where the repairs were to be carried out. But the consternation changed to broad smiles of amusement. What! Those tugs take the *Mauretania* across? No fear; it was only a bluff put up to force them to come to terms.

That was on Thursday afternoon. On Friday the

harbour tugs came alongside the *Mauretania* at her berth and made fast—and a crowd of men came down to look on and scoff. We were carrying on the bluff, were we?

But they stayed to see the liner cast off, saw her towed down Southampton Water and there the five Dutch tugs made fast and continued the tow. That made the men think; within twenty-four hours they had sent in overtures. But it was too late; we were on our way to Cherbourg.

On Friday evening late we passed the Nab and so were in the Channel. A fine night and a steady glass. By morning we were in sight of the French coast, but the wind was backing to the south-west and gradually freshening. By noon it was blowing a moderate gale, a strong flood-tide was making and the sea was getting up. We were light, many parts of the machinery were lying about the engine-room, secured, of course, by lashings, but the main danger was that the turbine covers were lifted. These, too, were lashed and tommed up, but I knew very well there would inevitably follow serious trouble if the ship listed one way or the other. Only on a perfectly even keel could we make harbour without great damage. Those covers weighed fifteen tons each.

The wind increased and the sea got rough and I wirelessly to the tugs not to tow but to try just to keep the ship head to wind and sea. I also understood the strain and anxiety of the Chief Engineer, Mr. Cockburn, who is still in the ship, and his assistants.

## HOME FROM THE SEA

Though we managed to keep the ship upright, by two o'clock we were simply going astern with a five-knot tide against us. Nothing could be done and we were only two miles off the rocks near Cape Barfleur! I had been watching the bearings pretty closely and though many on board were gravely concerned, I felt fairly confident that we could safely wait for the turn of the tide. That would enable us to get away from the coast.

While in this predicament we saw the *Berengaria* nearing Cherbourg and I thought what a noble ship she was. At the turn of the tide we edged away from the land, the wind dropped, the sea went down and everything became comfortable.

I had arranged to send wireless messages every six hours to headquarters in Liverpool and Southampton and also to Cherbourg. I had dispatched one about 3 p.m. on Saturday afternoon to our Marine Superintendent in Cherbourg and I had mentioned going astern about two to three knots. This had been an extra communication, in reply to one from him. At six I sent my usual six-hour message along to the wireless room to say all was O.K. But that message did not go then. The Senior Wireless Officer informed me that he could not dispatch it as a ship was on the rocks close to the Casquets (Channel Islands) and was sending out S.O.S.

Now it is a rule that all ship stations shall "keep quiet" within a certain radius when a vessel sends out an S.O.S., a very wise provision so that all ears,

## INTO STEAM

as it were, shall be open to listen to the distressed ship. It meant that my message was not dispatched until 6.30 a.m. Sunday.

And all that time, while we on board were perfectly happy, consternation had been reigning on shore about us. The report got about that it was the *Mauretania* that was wrecked on the Casquets and sending out S.O.S. ! You can imagine the alarm that exercised our officials at headquarters. The offices were besieged by half-distracted relatives of men on board, and when the *Berengaria* reported that she had seen us not far from the coast it seemed to substantiate the worst fears. Not until my message was received was the tense anxiety allayed.

## CHAPTER IV

### COMMAND

SHOULD a sailor marry? I have heard the question discussed a hundred times and there is something in the argument that it is not fair on the lady, since a man who follows the sea is away so much. But marriage has nothing really to do with conditions. If it is a right marriage it will help a man—and a woman—whatever their circumstances; if, unfortunately, it is a wrong marriage it will prove a mistake whether the parties are millionaires or peasants, whether they spend much time together or very little.

I married when I was second officer of the *Etruria*, and that was in 1899, and though my work necessarily occasioned lengthy periods when I could not get home . . . well, that, perhaps, only made the homecomings the more delightful. And as I write now it makes me think what would this final homecoming be like without the blessings of a happy home life to share.

We had just entered the South African War when I received my promotion, and it was as first officer of the *Aurania* that I saw my first experience in troop-

## COMMAND

fourteen years later, when the Great War broke out. Conveying troops to South Africa was not attended with any of the risks and thrills that we met at sea during 1914-18. There were no enemy cruisers threatening us, no submarines. We did not have to be convoyed by the Navy ; indeed, it was little more than an agreeable change from ordinary passenger life, for the men we took out were in high mood, good fellows, cheery and suffering from only one fear apparently—that they would not get to “ the show ” before it was all over. And their only grievance was what they called “ spit and polish.” They said they were going out to fight, not to pipe-clay their belts. Well, I’m afraid many of them saw all the fighting they wanted.

A troopship in those days was little more than an onlooker at war. We took out the fit to fight—and brought back the invalids.

After that I joined the *Pannonia* as Chief Officer, running from New York to the Mediterranean, and that gave me an insight into the pleasure of joining a new ship. We took her over in Glasgow and were pretty busy on the run to Trieste preparing for our first passengers, whom we took on there. A bright lot they were ! They came from all the countries round the Mediterranean—Italians, Croats, Hungarians, Austrians, Greeks, Bulgarians, Rumanians ; all emigrants. The men and the women were berthed separately in opposite ends of the ship, but were, of course, allowed to mix on deck during the daytime



## HOME FROM THE SEA

until 9.30 and often later when, on warm pleasant nights, the captain gave special permission.

But they wanted watching. Hot tempers sometimes flared out and words would lead to the flash of a knife and an oozing wound. We had to treat these offenders with a certain amount of severity. That usually consisted of making them spend a night down the forepeak where, with rats for company and to the accompaniment of the pounding seas against the hull, added to the fact that it was pitch-dark, they soon saw the reasonableness of better behaviour. Only a small minority got wild, the majority being quiet to the point of almost pathetic docility.

They had for the most part never been aboard a ship before, and were childishly afraid of any unusual happening. On one occasion, in filling the forward deep tank with sea water, the carpenter was not quite quick enough in having the pump stopped. The hatches leading to the tank and the tank man-hole being off, the water commenced to pour out and run about. It sent these poor ignorant souls into a state of absolute panic. The ship was sinking! We soon had over two thousand of them crowding into the boats and clambering wildly up the rigging. The sight was not nice—human souls naked in alarm—but after a bit of horse-play and a good deal of laughter and chaffing we managed to get them in control again. They quietened like a flock of sheep. But that carpenter did not get off scot-free!

Followed a spell in the *Etruria* again and then I

## COMMAND

was transferred to the *Campania*. It was while in her we were coming one Friday evening into Queenstown when, off Galley Head, I noticed something sticking up out of the water.

“Keep clear of the snag right ahead,” I called out to the junior officer who was with me on the bridge.

We swung away a point but gradually drew nearer so that we were able to make out what the unusual thing was. It was a sea monster! It was no more than fifty feet from the ship's side when we passed it, and so both I and the junior officer had a good sight of it. So strange an animal it was that I remember crying out: “It's alive!” One has heard such yarns about these monsters and cocked a speculative eye at the teller, that I wished as never before that I had a camera in my hands. Failing that, I did the next best thing and on the white “dodger board” in front of me I made sketches of the animal, full face and profile, for the thing was turning its head from side to side for all the world as a bird will on a lawn between its pecks.

I was unable to get a clear view of the monster's “features,” but we were close enough to realize that its head rose eight or nine feet out of the water, while the trunk of the neck was fully twelve inches thick.

The captain had just gone below for dinner. The last order he gave to me before descending was to keep a good look out for Galley Head and the first question he asked me when he came on to the bridge again was: “Have you seen anything, Rostron?”

## HOME FROM THE SEA

“Yes, sir,” I answered. “A sea serpent.”

It was then I was subjected to that speculative glance I spoke of.

“What did you drink for dinner?” he asked me.

“Not had my dinner yet, sir,” I replied airily.

“Then what did you take in your cabin after I left the bridge?”

“Haven’t left the bridge since you saw me, sir.”

His brows went up in surprise; I couldn’t help smiling and so I showed him the sketches of the thing I had made. His doubt as to my reliability faded and he evinced great interest, but I am not sure he was altogether convinced that I had not been suffering from some hallucination despite the corroboration of the junior officer.

There was a sequel, however.

We docked at Liverpool in due course and rejoined the following Friday. That night I was in my cabin when a knock sounded on the door.

“Come in,” I invited and in walked the Captain.

“Did you see it, Rostron?” he asked simply.

“Yes, sir,” I answered, and that was all the conversation. But I knew to what he referred.

The previous Monday evening when at home I was looking at the evening paper and was interested to read of an experience a man had gone through in the Bristol Channel. He had been picked up in a boat in a very exhausted condition, drifting out of control, as he had lost oars and boat-hook. He told a story how that on the Saturday previous he had gone out

## COMMAND

fishing, and in the evening had been attacked by a huge sea monster and had fought it off with his boat-hook and oars, losing them all. His description of the animal compared accurately with the one I had seen, and as I saw it heading from the south of Ireland towards the direction of the Bristol Channel there was left little doubt in my mind that it was the same—and no longer any doubt in the Captain's that my monster had been real enough.

The *Campania* was a fast ship, which meant that we took quite heavy water over in a sea-way ; to be half-drowned in spray was a usual occurrence. One winter voyage, when crossing the Banks and steaming through the Labrador Current, it was intensely cold. It was blowing fairly fresh, with wind and sea practically ahead. A lot of spray came over the bows and early in the morning the daylight showed us the ship covered with ice. As the sun came out a fascinating picture was presented—the ship looked like a mammoth Christmas card. But I didn't appreciate the extra weight of ice on the top-sides. I got all hands chopping at it and throwing it overboard. There were hundreds of tons of it and that was a serious threat to our safety. At nine o'clock that morning the temperature was 25 degrees ; before noon, having left the Current and arrived in the Gulf Stream, it had risen to 60. Every particle of ice had vanished.

But the Gulf Stream was soon passed. The following day we were again covered in ice, and we arrived in New York in a blizzard, to find the harbour full

## HOME FROM THE SEA

of ice. When the ice is drifting down the Hudson it is difficult for a ship to berth. Sometimes it entails hours of hard labour with half a dozen tugs breaking the ice and shouldering great lumps of it out of the dock. I've seen the Hudson frozen solid from side to side and, Jove ! but it's cold ! This sort of weather was specially felt in the *Campania*. We used to call her a semi-submersible—going under after leaving the Fastnet and coming up again making Sandy Hook !

At this time the *Lusitania* was completing at Clyde Bank, and I joined her as Chief Officer to take over. There was much to do, as I had to familiarize myself with the ship and the thousand and one things about her, also to arrange the organization so far as it concerned me. Eventually we left the fitting-out berth and, with several tug-boats in attendance, got safely down the Clyde, anchoring off the "Tail of the Bank." The banks of the river were crowded with sightseers, and excursion steamers plied about. She was a veritable Queen of the Seas and Scotland was very proud of her—as was also the Cunard Company when, after completing our trials, we arrived in the Mersey and she was formally taken over.

But I did not make a voyage in her—then. That was to come later. The very day after arriving at Liverpool I was relieved and—appointed to my first command.

My ship was the *Brescia*, the newest and best of the Cunard Cargo fleet.

Captain at last ! And yet—for a while just at first,

## COMMAND

as I looked along the decks of the tiny *Brescia*, inevitably comparing her with the huge *Lusitania* I had just left, it seemed rather like the Irishman's rise. But only for a day or so. Then I was at sea with my own ship and—well, one's first command is a prideful occasion; the larger vessels could wait.

We called at Swansea to complete our cargo and right at the outset I was to have the sense of responsibility brought home to me, though I was not aware of it until we had completed the voyage to the Mediterranean and were back at Liverpool. There a rather nasty situation faced me.

Apparently, after we had left Swansea it was found that the gates of the dock would not swing. A diver was sent down to ascertain the cause and he discovered that the chains had carried away. The basin was emptied and there on the bed were a ship's bilge keels. They decided they must be ours.

I was asked on my return if I had lost my bilge keels.

"No," I said at once. The thing seemed impossible.

On discharging cargo, however, we went into dry dock and lo! our bilge keels were missing. I believe our people thought I was bluffing—that I must have known. But I didn't—of course I didn't. Would any master take the responsibility of proceeding to sea knowing the bilge keels had been ripped off with the concomitant possibility of hundreds of rivets being torn out of the ship's side and leaking tons of water to the minute? That view was upheld and the matter

## HOME FROM THE SEA

blew over, but, though I kept my job all right, it was hardly an auspicious start as master.

The *Veria*, the *Pavia*, the *Pannonia*, and so to the *Carpathia*, and it was while in command of the last-named vessel that I experienced the most dramatic and memorable night of my career—the night the *Titanic* went down.

## CHAPTER V

### THE LOSS OF THE *TITANIC*

OF the thousand pictures retained in my mind of that tragic night when the *Titanic* was lost, the first that recurs is of a man stooping as he unlaced his boots !

He was the Marconi operator on board the *Carpathia*, and if that officer had not been keen on his job, ignoring the regulation time to knock off, many of the seven hundred-odd lives we were able to save that night might have been added to the appalling list of dead that marks the disaster as the greatest in maritime history.

In those days wireless was but a recent addition to the equipment of ships at sea. We were quite proud of our installation, though it had a normal range of only 130 miles, and just over 200 miles in exceptionally favourable circumstances.

And we carried only one operator.

This man should have finished duty at midnight. Yet here was half-past twelve and he was still listening in. But he was on the very point of retiring. He was, in fact, in the act of bending down to undo his boots when the dread call came, for in his interest he still retained the phones upon his ears.



## HOME FROM THE SEA

“S.O.S. *Titanic* calling. We have struck ice and require immediate assistance.”

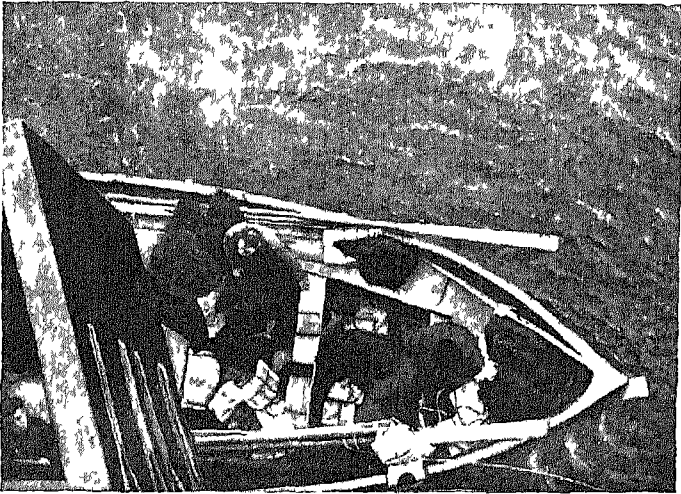
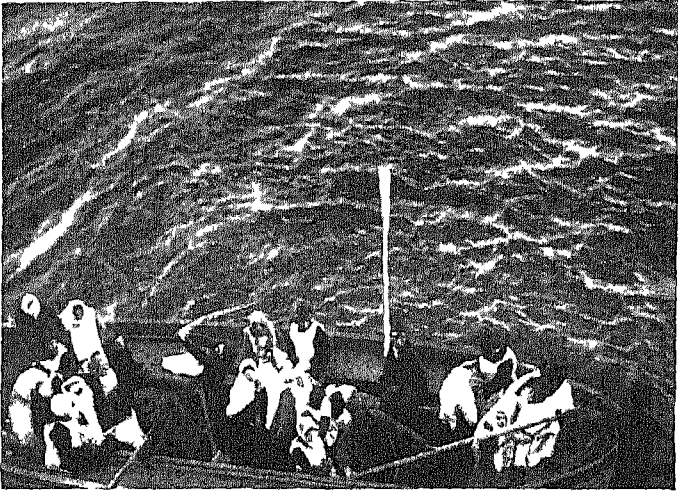
One can imagine him jerking upright, the alarm growing in his mind, though to be sure, in those first minutes, we none of us permitted our fears to embrace so devastating an accident as it was destined to prove. But it was the *Titanic*, a mammoth ship, proudful in her size and power, carrying over two thousand souls and making her maiden voyage from England to America! That was sufficient to impress on the operator the magnitude of the danger and, throwing the earphones to the table, he raced to the first officer who was on watch at the time.

It is a dramatic thought, that if the signal had been two or three minutes later we should not have picked it up!

The news was at once brought to me. Curious how trivial things stamp themselves on the mind in moments of crisis. I can remember my door opening—the door near the head of my bunk which communicated with the chart-room. I had but recently turned in and was not asleep, and drowsily I said to myself: “Who the dickens is this cheeky beggar coming into my cabin without knocking?”

Then the first officer was blurting out the facts and you may be sure I was very soon wide awake, with thoughts for nothing but doing all that was in the ship’s power to render the aid called for.

So incredible seemed the news that, having at once given orders to turn the ship—we were bound from



*Titanic* PASSENGERS COMING ABOARD THE *Carpathia*



## THE LOSS OF THE *TITANIC*

New York to Gibraltar and other Mediterranean ports, while the *Titanic* was passing us westward bound, sixty miles to our nor'ard—I got hold of the Marconi operator and assured myself there could have been no mistake.

“Are you sure it is the *Titanic* that requires immediate assistance?” I asked him.

“Yes, sir.”

But I had to ask again. “You are absolutely certain?” for remember, the wireless was not at the pitch of perfection and reliability it is to-day.

“Quite certain,” he replied.

“All right,” I said then. “Tell him we are coming along as fast as we can.”

I went into the chart-room, having obtained from the operator the *Titanic's* position. It was Lat.  $41^{\circ} 46'$  N., Long.  $50^{\circ} 14'$  W.

I at once worked out the course and issued orders. Within a few minutes of the call we were steaming all we knew to the rescue. The *Carpathia* was a fourteen-knot ship, but that night for three and a half hours she worked up to seventeen knots. One of the first things I did, naturally, was to get up the chief engineer, explain the urgency of matters and, calling out an extra watch in the engine-room, every ounce of power was got from the boilers and every particle of steam used for the engines, turning it from all other uses, such as heating.

Fortunately it was night—fortunately, I mean, from one aspect—all our passengers were in their bunks.

## HOME FROM THE SEA

Many never woke until the drama had been played out, because one of my first instructions was that, as far as possible, absolute silence should be maintained, while every man was told to instruct any passengers seen about to return to their cabins and stay there.

There was much to be done. All hands were called, and then began over three hours of restless activity and never-ending anxiety.

For though, as I say, it was fortunate that our passengers were asleep, the covering of night added to the risks we had to take. Ice! Racing through the dark towards we knew not what danger from bergs, standing on the bridge with every one keeping a bright look out, I was fully conscious of the danger my own ship and passengers were sharing.

I may say now that the spring of that year was phenomenal in regard to ice. The *Titanic* was on her right course, a course where, it is true, one at times may see ice, but that night was so exceptional as to be unique in anyone's memory. The reason was that two summers before the season had been unusually warm in the far north. Islands of ice had broken adrift from their polar continent and come drifting south. It took two years for these giant remnants to work their way so far south and we were to be amazed when daylight broke to find on every hand berg and floe stretching as far as the eye could reach.

Into that zone of danger we raced the *Carpathia*, every nerve strained watching for the ice. Once I

## THE LOSS OF THE *TITANIC*

saw one huge fellow towering into the sky quite near—saw it because a star was reflected on its surface—a tiny beam of warning which guided us safely past. If only some such friendly star had glistened into the eyes of the look-out on the *Titanic*. . . . Ah, well, it was not to be.

Before I could take the bridge, however, there were a thousand and one things to be done. They started at once. Even as I stood in the chart-room working out the position I saw the bosun's mate pass with the watch off to wash down decks. I called him, told him to knock off routine work and get all our boats ready for lowering, not making any noise. Questioning surprise leapt into his eyes.

"It's all right," I assured him. "We are going to another vessel in distress."

The first officer I called, as I said, was the engineer. Speed was the imperative need. When he had gone to turn out his extra watch—and as soon as the men heard what was wanted and why, many of them went to work without waiting to dress; good fellows!—I had up the English doctor, purser and chief steward and to these I gave the instructions which follow:

The English doctor to remain in the first-class dining-room; the Italian doctor in the second-class dining-room and the Hungarian doctor in the third. All to have ready supplies of stimulants, restoratives and other necessities.

Purser, with his assistant purser and chief steward, to receive the rescued at the different gangways,

controlling our own stewards in assisting the *Titanic* passengers to the different dining-rooms for accommodation and attention. They also to get as far as possible names of survivors, to be sent by wireless.

The inspector, steerage stewards and masters-at-arms to control our own steerage passengers, keep them out of the third-class dining-hall and to restrain them from going on deck. Chief steward to call all hands and have coffee ready for our men and soup, coffee, tea, etc., for the rescued. Blankets to be placed ready near gangways, in saloons and public rooms and others handy for the boats. All spare berths in steerage to be prepared for *Titanic's* third-class passengers while our own steerage occupants were to be grouped together.

To all it was enjoined that the strictest silence and discipline should be maintained, while a steward was to be stationed in each gangway to reassure our own passengers should any hear noise and inquire—such inquirers to be asked politely but firmly to return to, and remain, in their own cabins.

Here I might interpolate the experience of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Ogden, friends of mine who were on board that night. They occupied a deck cabin and it was only to be expected that they should hear something of the preparations that were going forward. Their experience was duplicated many times, of course, by other passengers, though, while all these things were being done, the great majority of those on board slept peacefully, unaware of our exertions. A great credit to the crew.

THE LOSS OF THE *TITANIC*

Mr. Ogden told me later that during that night his wife woke and aroused him.

“What’s that noise on deck?” she asked.

“Don’t worry; go to sleep,”—the average man’s reply to the anxious wife at such an hour. But, like other ladies, she was not to be so summarily silenced.

“Open the door and see what’s wrong.”

Mr. Ogden obeyed the injunction. Outside was a steward. Mr. Ogden called him.

“What’s the noise all about?” he asked.

“Nothing, sir; doing work with the boats.”

“What for?” Mr. Ogden was growing interested.

“I can’t tell you, sir.”

Mr. Ogden retired and quite naturally only made his wife’s suspicions increase. She waited a few minutes listening to the noises which were inevitable as our boats were swung out on their davits.

“Try again,” she requested at length.

This time Mr. Ogden, peeping out, encountered the surgeon.

“What’s the trouble?”

“There’s no trouble. Please return to your cabin. It is the Captain’s orders.”

Which didn’t allay doubts. Going back and repeating the conversation to his wife, they both began to dress, putting their valuables in their pockets. Then the lady’s insistence recommenced.

“Try again.”

Once more Mr. Ogden opened the door—and, curiously enough, he again looked into the face of



## HOME FROM THE SEA

the surgeon. No need for questions, the surgeon ordered him back and told him on no account to leave the cabin until the Captain gave instructions. But the passenger was urgent and at length, as the only method of satisfying him, the surgeon said : " We are going to the *Titanic*. She's in distress."

" But isn't this ship in distress ? "

" No, sir ; it's the *Titanic* ; she's struck ice." But then Mr. Ogden saw stewards in line carrying pillows and blankets.

" There's something wrong," he concluded. And somehow he and Mrs. Ogden reached the deck. There they found some nook or corner and remained through the hours until, with the coming of the first gleams of dawn, they saw the ice and eventually the first boat.

Meanwhile, we were ploughing on through the night—a brilliant night of stars. I had been able to go to the bridge.

To me there the Marconi operator came reporting he had picked up a message from the *Titanic* to the *Olympic* asking the latter to have all her boats ready. The sense of tragedy was growing. But the *Olympic*, homeward bound, was hundreds of miles away, very much farther than we were. The *Titanic* had also called us. They asked how long we should be getting up.

" Say about four hours," I told the operator (we did it in three and a half hours), " and tell her we shall have all our boats in readiness and all other preparations necessary to receive the rescued."

## THE LOSS OF THE *TITANIC*

I then gave the following orders to the first officer :  
Prepare and swing out all boats ; all gangway doors to be opened.

Electric clusters at each gangway and over the side.

A block—with line rope—hooked in each gangway.

A chair—slung—at each gangway for getting up sick or injured.

Pilot ladders and side ladders at gangways and over the side.

Cargo falls, with both ends clear and bight secured, along ship's side on deck, for boat ropes or to help people up.

Lines and gaskets to be distributed about the decks to be handy for lashings, etc. Forward derricks to be rigged and topped and steam on winches—to get mails or other goods on board.

Oil to be poured down lavatories both sides to quiet the sea.

Canvas ash-bags to be near gangways for the purpose of hauling up children or helpless.

Company's rockets to be fired from 3 a.m. every quarter of an hour to reassure the *Titanic*.

And, beyond these, detailed instructions as to the various duties of the officers should the situation require the service of our boats.

At about 2.35—roughly two hours after the first call—the doctor came to the bridge and reported that all instructions were carried out and everything was in readiness.

## HOME FROM THE SEA

While we were talking together I saw a green flare about a point on our port bow.

“There’s her light,” I cried, pointing. “She must be still afloat.”

This looked like good news. An hour before the Marconi operator had brought me a message from the *Titanic* that the engine-room was filling. That had looked fatal. It left little doubt that she was going down. So to catch that green flare brought renewed hope.

Almost at once the second officer reported the first iceberg. It lay two points on the port bow and it was the one whose presence was betrayed by the star beam. More and more now were we all keyed up. Icebergs loomed up and fell astern; we never slackened, though sometimes we altered course suddenly to avoid them. It was an anxious time with the *Titanic’s* fateful experience very close in our minds. There were seven hundred souls on the *Carpathia*; these lives, as well as all the survivors of the *Titanic* herself, depended on a sudden turn of the wheel.

As soon as there was a chance that we were in view, we started sending up rockets at intervals of about a quarter of an hour and, when still nearer, fired the Company’s Roman candles (night signals) to let them know it was the *Carpathia* that was approaching. Occasionally we caught sight of a green light; we were getting pretty near the spot.

By this time the hope that their green signals had at first bred in us was gone. There was no sign of

## THE LOSS OF THE *TITANIC*

the *Titanic* herself. By now—it was about 3.35 a.m.—we were almost up to the position and had the giant liner been afloat we should have seen her. The skies were clear, the stars gleaming with that brightness which only a keen frosty air brings to them, and visibility was as good as it could be on a moonless night. I put the engines on the “stand by” so that the engineers should be on the alert for instant action. At four o’clock I stopped the engines ; we were there.

As if in corroboration of that judgment, I saw a green light just ahead of us, low down. That must be a boat I knew and, just as I was planning to come alongside, I saw a big berg immediately in front of us—the second officer reporting it at the same moment. I had meant to take the boat on the port side, which was the lee side if anything, though there was not much wind or sea. But the iceberg altered the plan. It was necessary to move with the utmost expedition. I swung the ship round and so came alongside the first of the *Titanic’s* boats on the starboard side.

Devoutly thankful I was that the long race was over ; every minute had brought its risk—a risk that only keen eyes and quick decisions could meet—but with that feeling was the veritable ache which the now-certain knowledge of the liner’s loss brought. No sign of her—and below was the first boat containing survivors.

A hail came up from her. “We have only one seaman in the boat and cannot work very well.”

They were a little way off our gangway.

## HOME FROM THE SEA

“All right,” I told them and brought the vessel right alongside. Then they started climbing aboard. Obviously they had got away in a hurry, for there were only twenty-five of them whereas the capacity of the boat was fully forty. They were in charge of one officer.

I asked that this officer should come to me as soon as he was on board and to him I put that heart-rending inquiry, knowing with a terrible certainty what his answer was to be.

“The *Titanic* has gone down?”

“Yes,” he said; one word that meant so much—so much that the man’s voice broke on it. “She went down at about two-thirty.”

An hour and a half ago! Alas, that we had not been nearer!

But there was no time for vain regrets. Daylight was just setting in and what a sight that new day gradually revealed! Everywhere were icebergs. About a third of a mile on our starboard beam was the one that a few minutes ago had faced us; less than a hundred feet off our port quarter was a growler—a broken-off lump of ice ten to fifteen feet high and twenty-five feet long. But stretching as far as the eye could reach were masses of them. I instructed a junior officer to go to the wheel-house deck and count them. Twenty-five there were over two hundred feet in height and dozens ranging from a hundred and fifty down to fifty feet.

And amid the tragic splendour of them as they lay

## THE LOSS OF THE *TITANIC*

in the first shafts of the rising sun, boats of the lost ship floated. From that moment we went on picking them up and as the rescued came aboard their thankfulness for safety was always mingled with the sense of their loss and the chattering cold that possessed them. Many of the women had been hours in those open boats, shielded from the almost Arctic cold only by a coat hastily thrown over night clothes—telling of the urgency with which they had left the ship, suggesting to the imagination awful long-drawn-out anxiety before the slips were loosed and the boat was on the water and away.

Slowly we cruised from boat to boat and as we neared the end of our questing, one gathered the enormity of the disaster. Altogether we picked up seven hundred and six persons ; but on the *Titanic* crew and passengers numbered over 2,000—so many hundreds lost who a few short hours before had been members of a gay and distinguished company—half-way through the maiden voyage of one of the world's largest liners !

While we slowly cruised, we held a service in the first-class dining-room—in memory of those who were lost and giving thanks for those who had been saved.

Except for the boats beside the ship and the icebergs, the sea was strangely empty. Hardly a bit of wreckage floated—just a deck-chair or two, a few life-belts, a good deal of cork ; no more flotsam than one can often see on a seashore drifted in by the tide. The ship had plunged at the last, taking everything with

## HOME FROM THE SEA

her. I saw only one body in the water; the intense cold made it hopeless for anyone to live long in it.

It was not for us to remain, especially as about this time—eight o'clock—we saw another ship coming up. This was the *Californian*. She carried no wireless and all the night had been lying not many miles away, hove to because of the ice. We signalled her now, asking her to continue searching as we were about to make for New York. The sea was rising and I was anxious to get well away from that danger zone in good daylight. So we got as many of the *Titanic's* boats as we could on board, some remaining suspended in our davits, others hauled on the forecastle head, and proceeded.

I may mention here that during the work of getting the boats alongside I happened to look down from the bridge and saw my friend Mr. Ogden. The day before he had been trying a new camera he had with him. So I cupped my hands and shouted down: "What about that new camera?" He glanced my way, threw up his hands as if to say he had never thought of it, sped off and in a few minutes was taking snaps of the boats as they came alongside.

They are the only authentic records of the occasion and surely an amateur photographer never had a more thrilling scene to take! The *Carpathia* had stopped in mid-Atlantic. It was a beautiful morning, a clear sun burning on sea and glistening on the icebergs. On every side there were dozens of these monsters,

## THE LOSS OF THE *TITANIC*

so wonderful to look at, so dreadful to touch. Some boats containing the survivors were alongside ; people were climbing up the ship's side, others being pulled up ; all wearing lifebelts (and incidentally it was the wearing of these that protected those who had been so long exposed in the boats and prevented many from dangerous chills) ; and then, from every quarter, boats were pulling in, all making for one common objective—the *Carpathia*.

One thing stands out in my mind about it all—the quietness. There was no noise, no hurry. When our passengers at length came on deck they were some time before they seemed to realize the stupendous nature of the tragedy ; it was too big to assimilate at once. Their hardly-awakened senses could not respond to the immensity of the scene. But as soon as reality followed on questionings, I must say our people understood that they must not remain spectators ; that here was a situation unparalleled in which they must play a part. They set about comforting the rescued, persuading them to take nourishment or stimulant, seeking to soften the grief which wrapped them round about. Our doctors must have been relieved to see our passengers using their persuasion and common sense so successfully.

They saw the survivors required dry and warm clothing, so off they took them to their own cabins to fit them out with everything they could. All our men passengers gave up their cabins and many of the ladies doubled up with others so as to leave their own



## HOME FROM THE SEA

quarters free for the distressed. Every officer, of course, yielded his accommodation.

In my cabin were three ladies, each of whom were bereaved. Their husbands, all millionaires, had perished and, in addition, one lady had lost a son. On the other hand, one had her son with her whose saving had that touch of the dramatic that was in evidence time and again that night.

This boy had been separated from his mother but later on had found a place in a collapsible boat. These things are like ordinary boats as to the hull except that they are flat-bottomed and their sides are canvas and can be folded down. The sides of the one this boy was in collapsed for some reason and he, with others, was kneeling on the hull. His position was even more precarious than it sounds, for, since they were helpless to propel it in any way, the boat was floating in the near vicinity of the liner and couldn't move away. It was right under her stern and from this boy I heard a graphic account of how the *Titanic* up-ended herself and remained poised like some colossal nightmare of a fish, her tail high in the air, her nose deep in the water, until she dived finally from human sight.

That collapsible was fortunate not to have been sucked down with the ship, probably the suction was lessened by reason of the pause and then the sliding movement she took ; at all events, the helpless boat merely bobbed a little dangerously and remained afloat.

THE LOSS OF THE *TITANIC*

In a little while a ship's boat came near. It was hailed and the boy was taken into her. And the first person whom he saw in this rescuing boat was his own mother. Imagine the joy of that meeting.

But it was more than matched by another, rather similar, episode of that night.

Some of the first boats may have got away not filled to capacity, but later others certainly were overloaded and there were heart-rending moments when too-well-laden boats pulling about encountered poor fellows swimming in that ice-cold sea.

In this case I am recounting a boat's gunwale was seized for'ard by a swimmer. It was well before dawn. No one could see who it was, but many voices were raised protesting against him being hauled in.

"We are full ; we are full," they cried. "Don't let him come in !"

One woman in the stern sheets, however, nursing her sorrow of a husband left behind on the sunken ship, begged for the swimmer to be taken in. The pity in her pleading prevailed and she knew the swimmer had been saved before she sank back into the frozen coma that great tragedy engenders.

Hours passed. At length dawn lit the haggard faces of those who huddled shiveringly in that boat. Only then did the woman see the features of the drenched man she had been chiefly instrumental in dragging from a death by drowning.

It was her own husband.

## HOME FROM THE SEA

It stirred the heart to see the fortitude of the bereaved, just as it sent a glow of pride to listen to some of the tales that were gradually revealed by the survivors of the sights that had been witnessed during those last hours on the sinking ship. Tales of bravery and self-sacrifice that add lustre to the human story, shown by every class. In those hours of trial, facing death, men were equal in heroism, whether they were the humblest or such as had much of this world's possessions. And one wondered, looking into the troubled and sometimes vacant faces of those who were saved, whether they or those left behind had the harder part to play. But it is sure that there were many that night who, loaded with riches and honours, showed they possessed the greater gifts of self-sacrifice and self-command.

We heard then and later of tales of the famous, tales, too, of the unknown. Of them all one remains warm in my memory. It concerns a young girl.

A boat full of women was ready for lowering from the stricken ship. It was found to be too full and the order was given for someone to get out. What a moment! But it had to be done, for the overfull boat endangered the lives of all. A young lady—a girl really—got up to leave the boat. At once some of the others protested, pleading that she should stay.

“No,” she said, “you are married and have families. I’m not; it doesn’t matter about me.”

She stepped out of the boat and returned to the

## THE LOSS OF THE *TITANIC*

deck. She went down with the ship. She gave her life that others might live. No words of mine can add to the beauty of that action. But that night it was duplicated a hundred times as the boats went off—until there were no more to go and those who remained knew all hope of safety was dissipated.

The night and the morning were crowded with incidents. Here is one that shows how truth can indeed be stranger than fiction. It also throws a light on the amazing quietness and smoothness with which the crew of the *Carpathia* went about their task of preparation and rescue.

We had sailed from New York on April 11 (1912). It had been a pleasant and smooth passage save for the intense cold, upon which we all remarked. On the Sunday—three days out—we were in reach by wireless of the *Titanic*. At dinner that night a message was received from that ship—a private communication. It came from two young ladies who were aboard her and was addressed to their uncle and aunt—Mr. and Mrs. Marshall—who were on the *Carpathia*. Just a cheery greeting, saying how they were enjoying the crossing on the new ship.

It was that same night she went down.

The Marshalls knew nothing of it. They retired to their state cabin ; they went to sleep. The night was calm, the sea smooth, they slept on all through the preparations that were going on aboard. But among the first of the survivors who came up one of the gangways were the two nieces who a few

## HOME FROM THE SEA

hours before had been wirelessly from the *Titanic* to the Marshalls. While the latter had been sleeping, these young ladies had been through all the agony of the night.

It was about half-past six when the Marshalls awoke. A steward knocking on their door aroused them.

“What is it?” asked Mr. Marshall.

“Your nieces wish to see you, sir,” replied the steward.

No wonder he was dumbfounded; hardly believing his eyes when he opened the door and looked upon the girls, not crediting his senses as he listened to their story.

Looking back on that morning I am persuaded to emphasize again as the outstanding feature the silence on board. There was absolutely no excitement. At first no doubt the enormity of the occurrence stunned the sensibilities of our passengers when they knew of it, while the rescued came solemnly, dumbly, out of a shivering shadow. Afterwards every one was too occupied to think.

The ladies were very soon self-appointed nursing sisters, getting the new-comers to lie abed, others to rest on deck, and doing what they could to ease suffering and console. As many of the second- and third-class passengers who came aboard were but poorly clothed, blankets and sheets were requisitioned and many of the ladies started to make clothes. Others went to the third-class and busied themselves nursing, clothing and feeding the children. The cream of

## THE LOSS OF THE *TITANIC*

human kindness was surely extended that morning and during the days that followed while we made New York, and through it all that quietness reigned—as though the disaster were so great that it silenced human emotion. It seems incredible that the trying experiences through which so many had passed should not have developed hysterical trouble, in some at least, but it didn't. Indeed, on Tuesday morning Dr. McGee came to me and made the satisfactory report that “all the survivors were physically well!” Marvellous!

I knew that was the reward of endless attention on his part and that of the entire staff. No one relinquished their utmost efforts. Loyally and cheerfully every member of the crew, both officers and men, gave of their best. Doctors, pursers, stewards—even the little bell-boys—all entertained no thought of rest from the moment I issued my first orders until we had landed the survivors in New York and had again left to take up our interrupted voyage to the Mediterranean.

In all that large assembly of differing human beings I heard of only one instance of selfishness. A certain foreigner who had come aboard bedded himself down in one of the smoke-rooms. With an acquisitive eye, and a disregard of others, he had obtained several blankets for his own comfort. These were draped round his portly figure when other men found they were devoid of any. He was asked to share up, but adopted that old motto of “What

## HOME FROM THE SEA

I have I hold." There was a small council of war among a few men. But the war was soon over—and the blankets distributed.

Which reminds me of another incident in lighter vein—for in the human drama, however near the tragic, there always seems to shoot a ray or two of humour. The man himself told me the experience later and, with the heaviness of the immediate worry off my mind, I couldn't help laughing at the picture his tale called up.

It seems that he, having given up his cabin, was bedless. He wandered about the ship looking for some niche in which to curl up when, *mirabile!* he espied an empty mattress with some blankets handy. With a sigh of relief he lay down, pulled the blankets over his head and went peacefully to sleep. Can you imagine his disconcerted surprise when in the morning he woke up to find himself entirely surrounded by women? He had camped himself out in a portion of the ship which had been reserved for the rescued ladies and had lain there unnoticed through the night. His retreat was more hurried than strategic.

Well, having left the *Californian* in charge of the search—hopeless as it was that any man could live in that ice-cold sea—we started on our return. We soon found our passage blocked by a tremendous ice-field. There surely never was so much ice in that latitude. We had, of course, seen this field before, but had no means of knowing how compact it was or what was its extent. All we could see

## THE LOSS OF THE *TITANIC*

was that it stretched to the horizon—a remarkable awesome sight with great bergs up to two hundred feet in height standing out of the general field, which, itself, was six to twelve feet above the water-line. These little mountains were just catching the early sunshine which made them take on all manner of wonderful aspects. Minarets like cathedral towers turned to gold in the distances and, here and there, some seemed to shape themselves like argosies under full sail.

For nearly four hours we sailed round this pack—quite fifty-six miles. Then we were clear and could set our course for New York.

I ought to mention that the *Olympic*, which at the time of the disaster was some hundreds of miles to the westward, having left New York on the Saturday, had wirelessly suggesting she should take off the rescued. But I was against any such move. Fortunately, Mr. Ismay, the chairman of the White Star Line, was among those saved, and when I informed him, suggesting that it would be unwise to endeavour to tranship these poor people who had just been saved from the boats, he at once agreed and told me to request the *Olympic* to keep out of sight. So on we went, still passing other isolated bergs from time to time. I remember that about noon we passed the Russian steamer *Burmah* who, bound east, made an endeavour to cut through that ice-pack. But he turned out again and I didn't blame him either!



## HOME FROM THE SEA

We were able to communicate to the *Olympic* the bare facts of the disaster, and I also sent the official message to the Cunard Company together with as many names of the survivors as we then had. This offered the first chance we had of dispatching the news to shore. It was—owing to the short range of wireless then in operation—also the last opportunity we had of establishing communication until Wednesday afternoon, and then we learned how the world had waited in suspense for details and especially a correct and complete list of passengers and crew who had been saved.

After the ice, we ran into that other great enemy of ships at sea—fog. For hours it enshrouded us, and again on Wednesday it came down thick, continuing more or less all the way to New York. The dismal nerve-racking noise of the whistle every half-minute must have been particularly distressing to the survivors, and I was sorry for their state of mind, having encountered this after all their other experiences.

We had taken three bodies from the boats and one man died during the forenoon on Monday. All four were buried on Monday afternoon, Protestant and Roman Catholic services being held over them.

During Wednesday afternoon we were in communication with U.S.S. *Chester*—dense fog at the time—and through her were able to send a more complete list of survivors and corrections. We picked up Fire Island light-vessel from its fog-horn on Thurs-

## THE LOSS OF THE *TITANIC*

day afternoon and, about six, stopped off Ambrose Channel lightship and took on our pilot. And now we got some idea of that suspense every one was in. Press boats literally surrounded us !

I decided that these journalists must not come on board. The comfort of the rescued had to be the first consideration. To have them interviewed by dozens of alert young newspaper men, eager to get the most lurid details, would cause endless distress, making them live it all over again. It was, of course, only in the nature of the reporters' jobs to get news, and when I told them they would not be allowed on board it was amusing to see the tactics some of them adopted to defeat my ruling.

These Press boats carried huge placards announcing this was from such and such a paper and that from another. They badgered and pleaded to be allowed to interview me and the passengers, but I could not oblige. Two pressmen adopted the ruse of coming in the pilot's boat. Now he was a friend of mine, and it was not easy to give him a straight refusal.

"Can these fellows come aboard?" he yelled.

I cupped my hands and sang out: "I can't hear you."

"They want to come aboard. They have friends on the ship."

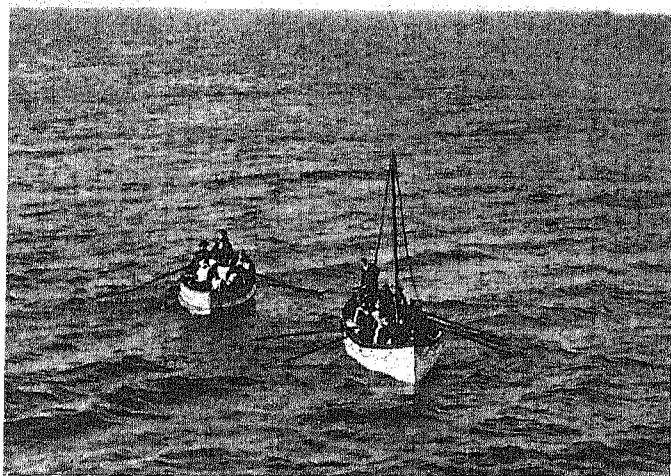
"I can't hear what you say," I shouted and they knew, I guess, I was prevaricating. When the pilot had the ladder down, however, I expected they would try to get on board after him. So I had a rope bent

## HOME FROM THE SEA

from the bottom of the ladder and set two boys to haul it in as the pilot came up. You can see what happened. The moment the pilot had lifted his foot from one rung to the next, the boys drew in the rope and the ladder was hoisted right under the man's heels. One of the two in his boat made a jump and tried to follow, but the ladder wasn't there and he fell backwards.

Of them all one pressman only got aboard. That was later, after we were stopped off quarantine. He made a jump that risked his life and landed on the deck. This was reported to me and I had him brought to the bridge. I explained my reasons for not having anyone on board and that I could not allow the passengers to be interviewed. I put him on his honour not to leave the bridge under certain penalties and, I must say, he was a gentleman. After we had docked and the passengers had left I know he made a good story out of his exploit, being the only man to get aboard, and I believe he got complimented—which, after all, he deserved for his temerity.

But before we got to quarantine, the weather made another violent change. It brought the most dramatic ending to the tragic episode. First it began to blow hard, then the rain tumbled down and, as a finale, as though the curtain had to come down under unusual surroundings, it commenced to lightning. Vivid flashes accompanied us all the way up the channel to quarantine and heavy thunder-claps



FIFTH OFFICER LIGHTOLLER BRINGING IN THE *Titanic's* BOATS



ONE OF THE *Titanic's* COLLAPSIBLE BOATS



## THE LOSS OF THE *TITANIC*

rolled across the skies. This weather held until we were off the Cunard dock.

While on the bridge in the pelting rain a bundle of letters and a number of telegrams were brought to me. I couldn't examine them at the moment and put them in my pocket. During a lull, later on, I ran into my chart-room, dipped a hand into my rather full pocket and drew out one item—only one. It was a cable and came from my wife! Quite satisfied I returned to my bridge.

It was a scene never to be forgotten. Press photographers on the dock let off their flashlights. All round the ship were dozens of tug-boats and, before we could tie up, all the *Titanic's* boats had to be lowered because they were in the way of working the mooring ropes. In each of those boats went two of the *Titanic's* rescued crew and to see them pull into the pitchy night brought back to one's mind again the last occasion when they had been lowered from their own great and magnificent mother ship which was destined never to arrive at this harbour.

After nine o'clock at night they left us—those who had come out of the terror of shipwreck—and no one was more glad than I to see them passing on to the land. Not, of course, that they personally were well rid of, but to think that the long guardianship was over and they were safe. We had all been strained to the highest pitch of anxiety and the extent of that concern was now the measure of our relief. The job was done. We at once thought of our own affairs.

## HOME FROM THE SEA

We had set out to make the Mediterranean ; we had a fairly full complement of passengers. I hastily replenished linen, blankets, etc., that the interruption had utilized, from a sister ship, and that same Thursday afternoon—exactly a week from the time of our previous sailing—we left the dock, re-stored, watered and coaled, and—went on with our job. One of our passengers left us, but we took on two fresh ones so that we had a gain of one !

It had been, indeed, an eventful week—eventful in the history of shipping, it was to prove. One of the results was that the Board of Trade made new regulations that on every ship at sea there were to be carried sufficient boats to accommodate all passengers and crew. To-day it seems incredible that it needed this appalling calamity to bring in such a regulation—and it hardly bears thinking about that if there had been sufficient boats that night when the *Titanic* was lost every soul aboard could have been saved, since it was two and a half hours after she struck that she tilted her mammoth stern into the heavens and sank by the head, taking with her all that were unprovided for. Now, yonder from Portsmouth even on the little ferry boats that ply between port and the Isle of Wight there are life-saving appliances for all the passengers the ferries can hold.

One other good thing resulted from the disaster. Supported by both Britain and America, there is now a constant ice patrol—from March to July or

## THE LOSS OF THE *TITANIC*

August—always watching along the latitudes where sometimes the ice reaches—and reporting to all shipping whenever there floats out of the icy maw of the far north bergs which might bring to some other ill-fated ship the calamity which met the *Titanic*.

*Titanic!* Of all the remarkable incidents connected with the short life of that ship of destiny not the least was her name. If you look in your dictionary you will find : Titans.—A race of people vainly striving to overcome the forces of nature.

Could anything be more unfortunate than such a name, anything more significant?

That would seem to be the natural end to the story. Yet for me the repercussions went on for some time. Having refuelled, filled up our water-tanks and so on, we took up our interrupted voyage. In July I returned to England overland from Naples to attend the inquiry held in London into the *Titanic's* loss; then followed several weeks of holiday. It was in December that I left the *Carpathia*, leaving on board the testimonials with which we had been presented by the rescued. There followed a round of social functions. I had to be in Washington on March 2 to receive from the hands of President Taft the Congressional Medal of Honour "with the thanks of Congress." The British Ambassador, Lord Bryce, took us to White House to receive this, the highest honour the United States Government can bestow, and afterwards we returned to the British Embassy where I was presented with the American Cross of



## HOME FROM THE SEA

Honour. My wife and I had a royal time for a few days and then returned in the *Mauretania*—the *Mauretania* which I was to command so long and through such exciting times.

And it was during those exciting times of the war which were soon to be upon us that the gallant *Carpathia* was to end her days. She was torpedoed in May, 1918, off the south of Ireland. It was a sorry end to a fine ship, yet it is a fitting end to my tale of her career. She had done her bit both in peace and war, and she lies in her natural element, resting her long rest on a bed of sand.

## CHAPTER VI

### WAR—WHY WE FAILED IN GALLIPOLI

THERE are several million of men and women who have their own personal experience of the War. When I contemplate my own, one of the most remarkable facts that at once leaps to my mind is that during hostilities six Cunard ships which had been under my command were sunk—after I had left them.

And that reminds me that during all my forty-six years of wanderings and adventures I cannot claim the distinction of ever having been shipwrecked.

It seemed as though some special providence guided me through the War. As I mentioned at the outset, I once went out from Marseilles across a danger zone when a ship was torpedoed in front of me and another just behind.

There was an occasion, as I shall relate, when a great ship was sent to the bottom with over a thousand lives directly after I had passed her. I traversed the Mediterranean all through the fiasco of Gallipoli when the average loss of ships was 1.5 per day of total tonnage. I took my quota of troops to make the Gallipoli landing—and watched that epic endeavour two miles off shore. And all through,

my star remained undimmed. In all that maelstrom of disaster I was never once hit. To-day, in the tranquil environment of the Downs, with that wild and breathless story behind, I find words of gratitude come very readily to the mind.

But—to the log.

News of the great outbreak came to my ears in Montreal, where I had gone in the new ship *Alaunia*, my latest command. On the way from the office to the ship I saw the placards announcing the declaration of war and, as I walked along a little contemplatively, I heard a woman say: "Yes, and they will take all our men from us." How nearly correct was that prophecy!

There was, of course, great excitement in the town, but we were to feel the direct effect, perhaps, before anyone else out there. When we left harbour we had strict instructions to watch out for enemy cruisers. Not only was that a general order; in this case it was particular in that our people had definite knowledge that, even then, there were two German cruisers lying off the Newfoundland coast.

We had to pass them.

Dense fog set in on our way down the Gulf of St. Lawrence, but it was war-time now and we had to take risks. We steamed full speed, with the whistle blowing just at odd intervals, and we had one very close shave of colliding with a vessel going the opposite way. That seemed nothing; we realized the sea was to be full of dangers now.

The weather cleared off Cape Race and very soon we were among floe ice ; it was soft, however, and we were able to cut through it. After dinner that first night out I left the bridge to go round the promenade deck and, just as I stepped through the door, I noticed several people staring in one direction with a suspicious intentness. They were in the forepart of the ship and I joined them.

Right ahead I discerned the dim shape of a vessel. I knew at once what it was, whether they did or not. It was an enemy cruiser.

I betrayed no haste as I turned and walked away from the group. Even as I did I could hear hurried steps overhead leaving the bridge and I knew what that meant—a messenger for me. I was able to stop him speaking within anyone's hearing. The messenger was at the top of the ladder as I reached its base and he almost jumped down in his excitement.

"It's all right," I told him quickly but quietly, "I've seen it."

The officer of the watch had rung up "full speed" twice on the engines and had turned the ship away from the cruiser. I at once turned her right round and even as I did so couldn't help smiling as I watched the chief engineer come slowly along the promenade deck and up the ladder to the bridge.

"What exactly *do* you want?" he inquired with forced patience. "The ship is making all she can."

With a shrug I told him he must make extra speed and then pointed out the cruiser. He didn't leave

## HOME FROM THE SEA

with that measured tread which had characterized his approach ! And soon the ship was pulsing to all her engines could do.

I had wirelessly one of our own cruisers and, as it was getting dusk, I had a hope that I could outsteam the enemy. Half an hour and it was dark ; then I wirelessly my course *en claire*. Behind that was a purpose. Very soon the wireless operator came running to say a *Telefunken* wireless had repeated my message to another ship ! This was what I was waiting for. Now that the enemy thought they knew my course, I altered it four points and, in an hour, another four points. We were absolutely dark, of course, not a light showed aboard. I had received a message in reply to mine from one of our ships, but I did not answer until I was well away in case the other fellow had his direction-finder working. We never sighted the enemy again.

And so to Plymouth with no further incident.

In London I reported for duty to the Registrar-General, but was told to stay in command of my ship. Back we went to Montreal, full of passengers rushing home, so crowded that any and every speck of accommodation was eagerly taken ; first-class passengers quite pleased and glad to get third-class cabins.

Then we began trooping.

After a busy week or so we left the St. Lawrence in a convoy of about 37 vessels escorted by cruisers. We were bringing 35,000 Canadian officers and men

to the war. All went well until we arrived nearly in home waters, when we heard that submarines were operating off the Isle of Wight and so our destination was abruptly changed from Southampton to Plymouth.

You have most likely seen the play "Journey's End" and will remember how Captain Stanhope looks in imagination through the walls of the dugout to picture the crawling worms, and so on, that actually exist out of sight. For four years it was every minute of the day and night easy for us at sea to imagine the tin fish of the enemy lying beneath the water—where? starboard, port, ahead, astern?—with his deadly projectile aimed. Their speed saved many of the ocean flyers—how often we heard stories of torpedoes passing astern a vessel by the narrowest of margins—but the fortunes of war favoured me in that respect, for though many of my old ships came to disaster, I was lucky throughout and thus my memories of the War, while those of one in the arena, are not coloured by actual personal hurt.

Our next trip was to India, and we carried two battalions of the Home Division (Territorials) to take the place of the Regulars who had been sent to the front. Those two battalions were not as friendly as they might have been; I don't know what the friction was and did not care, but it came to my notice in a peculiar and rather amusing way.

One lot started to grouse about the food. Now the Cunard Company were allowing them full third-

## HOME FROM THE SEA

class scale, which was infinitely superior to the ordinary Admiralty allowance. They probably did not know this; anyhow, they complained to their own colonel and he carried forward the complaint to the senior colonel who, perforce, brought it to me.

It was inconsiderate of the men and I had to take some sort of notice of it.

"I'll teach them a lesson," I told the senior colonel (whose own men had not complained).

"What shall you do?"

What I did I did in front of him. I called the chief steward and bade him bring up his menu together with the Admiralty List. We compared them.

"So," said I, "this—and that and that—are not in the Admiralty List?"

"No, sir."

"Then cut them out." In some cases I instructed him to halve what we had been giving—all in strict accordance with the Admiralty rations.

"But, I say," broke in the senior colonel, "your rather drastic lesson is going to apply to my men as well as the others, and we have made no complaint."

"That is unfortunately so," I admitted.

"I'm sorry," he said.

"So am I," I assured him.

Well, the "lesson" lasted one day. At the end of it the disaffected men asked for the old rations to be put back. The senior colonel came on their behalf to bring that request.

“Send the junior colonel to me,” I replied. “If he apologizes for his fellows having caused us so much trouble I’ll consider the matter.”

He came and said his piece and all was well thereafter.

They disembarked at Bombay, and we took on details and families—2,400 women and children, a rather pathetic lot, since the men belonging to them were already in the trenches and one could not help wondering how many of those who walked about our decks were already widows and orphans, not knowing it.

I used to look down on them from the bridge. Just beneath me one family, consisting of a mother and four children, slept at night. The mother would arrive with her little brood about 8 p.m. The baby would be given the place nearest her and then the remainder would stretch out in order of age, the outside child being only about six years old.

But even the seriousness that lay behind their lives did not eradicate the small human note. Mrs. Sergeant-Major would request to see the captain. Why should Mrs. Colour-Sergeant have better accommodation than she had? That’s what she wanted to know. She claimed her rights as holding superior rank, she did. And then there was one little hussy whose chief object in life seemed to be to flirt. She set her cap at every male within range. The fact that her husband was on board made no difference, and he formulated a complaint, asking if he couldn’t



## HOME FROM THE SEA

have a divorce ! She was rather a handful and so were many of the women who, having been used to native servants in India, would not keep their cabins clean. There was only one thing for it. I threatened them all that if they didn't obey orders and behave they would be put ashore at Aden and left to make their way home as best they could. That woke them up to the realities of life.

I never wanted to carry families again. It was a shipload of trouble. Meanwhile other ships in our convoy had troops on board, being, indeed, the famous 29th Division which later was to make history by their epochal landing on Gallipoli in conjunction with the Anzacs.

After a voyage to New York and Halifax, we received orders to fit out for troops. This was in March, 1915, when, as the world was to know later, the Allies were planning the Gallipoli campaign.

Now I am impelled to say something candid about Gallipoli. What a fiasco it was ! It is not my sphere, or my intention, to argue this way or that about the adventure from a naval, military or political standpoint. Sufficient for me is that the operation was carried out within my personal view and, merely as a close observer, I put forward the statement that it was, in some details, mismanaged. I sometimes wonder just how far-reaching the difference would have been if that first landing had been a success, and, looking back, it is astonishing how little care in many respects was taken to guarantee that

victory should reward the amazing, the unbelievable bravery of our men who made the initial onslaught.

I went eastbound for Mudros full of troops. In the Ægean a wireless switched me into Alexandria. There, in a few days, was assembled a fleet of ships—a modern Armada—every ship full of troops.

Often had I sailed the Ægean in peace-time. I had steamed up the Dardanelles, past Chanak out into the Sea of Marmora and to Constantinople. And now we were to take all these men somewhere near Cape Helles and we were to have some idea later what British soldiers can face, landing on a hostile coast, *expected*, the beach honeycombed with trenches filled with a plucky and fatalistic enemy. Thousands and thousands were to go down or return to us broken and hurt. But as we set sail for Mudros they were all cheery and keen to “get at ’em.”

I have stressed that word—“expected.” Let me tell you why. It is the secret of our disaster.

There were some fifty ships at Mudros, not to mention battleships and cruisers. From these ships, whenever possible, the men were landed for exercise. Like mushrooms, spies sprang up everywhere and *it is certain that the Island was haunted by them.*

Naturally enough, when on shore, the men would be allowed to “stand easy and fall out.” There was probably a café handy. The men might enter and, over a glass of beer or wine, would probably talk of the coming attack on the peninsula. That all the information thus broadcast was conveyed

## HOME FROM THE SEA

to the enemy is undoubted. It was but a night's sail in a small boat from Mudros to Gallipoli—and many, unfriendly to the Allies, must have made the trip.

No secret at all was made about where the landings were to be effected. This battalion at this beach, that company at that. And so on. The men knew their objective long beforehand and, indeed, made special study of the lie of the land. What was the result? When the great moment came every beach where a landing was sought *was a beach that the enemy had selected for the fullest possible preparation in the way of defence*. Our men were raked with a deadly, drenching fire long before they set foot on shore.

But with only thoughts of attack in their minds—a successful landing whatever the odds—we and certain other ships set out for Tenedos on the afternoon before the projected attack.

The eve of that famous landing! It would be difficult to convey the atmosphere of that night as the huge fleet, silent as ghost ships, moved in utter darkness to their various allotted positions. The troops had, of course, left the transports and were aboard battleships and cruisers. At daybreak all was ready.

A slight mist hung over the land when at 5 a.m. hundreds of guns of all calibres opened fire. One could hear the roar of the *Queen Elizabeth's* fifteen-inch guns and a thousand smaller barks—every muzzle trained on the shore as if they would sink the very peninsula. Achi Baba stood out well-

defined in the morning light four or five miles inland—Achi Baba which our men were to have taken by eight o'clock—Achi Baba on whose slopes no British officer or man was destined to set foot throughout the entire campaign !

The bombardment continued for one hour and at six o'clock our fellows were fighting their way on the beaches. They were landed from boats towed by steam launches and the smaller destroyers. The former, from the battleships and cruisers, were commanded by midshipmen—boys of from sixteen to nineteen years of age—and it was fine—and terrible—to see the way one and all faced the hail of death that met them. As I say, every spot chosen for landing was just the one especially prepared by the enemy. He knew as intimately as our own command the detailed plan of campaign.

Do you wonder what those men thought about as they were taken slowly towards their great ordeal ? I have a picture of one launch in my mind at the moment. It passed close under our bows and it was towing three boats. The soldiers in these boats were within a few minutes of meeting the enemy. For weeks they had been trained for this minute, and one knew that many of them would not live through the next hour. Yet as they passed under our eyes, the job ahead seemed the last thing of which they thought. To our amazement they were *engrossed in a game of cards*.

Salute the officers and men of the Twenty-Ninth !

## HOME FROM THE SEA

They did a job of work that morning which is good to recall in these later times of political mouthings and catch-phrases.

To have witnessed that epic landing is to have seen the gallantry of man at its highest. I stood on the bridge that dawn and watched it all. At length they were on shore—a shaky foothold here and there, fighting through a pitiless rain of shot, through carnage, with men falling like ninepins. No one shall ever tell the whole of that story of almost mad heroism—a heroism the full reward of which was defeated by the leakage of information to spies.

There were spies everywhere. I myself encountered three of them one evening while lying in Mudros. I was on the bridge when three men were announced asking to see me. I gave instructions for them to be brought up.

All smiles and pleasant words, they came to me full of friendly questionings. Had I been to Smyrna lately? Had I heard of Mr. So-and-so and how was So-and-so? They knew the names of men I had met in Smyrna before the war. Of course they were spies—German merchants in Smyrna of polished and suave manners. But whatever information they hoped to get they did not get. I saw that they were taken to the head-quarters ship. I don't know what their fate was—short, I hope.

Saturday evening and, watching from the bridge, I saw all beaches were in our hands with one exception. Here, from the *River Clyde*, men had been

mown down like corn before the reaping-machine. Bravery, pluck beyond praise, was of no effect. Even senior officers broke just because it was not humanly possible to withstand the murderous fire. It was a pity other officers did not have the inspiration that was shown by one colonel. His battalion was being towed ashore as arranged when he asked the naval officer commanding just where the landing position was to be. It was pointed out and the soldier saw how heavily entrenched it was and the enormous odds against him. Instantly he ordered a change of venue. Another beach near by was selected. There—further if inverse evidence of the spies' work—the enemy was not prepared. The colonel got his men ashore with little loss and took the position originally planned, from the flank.

It makes one wonder how different might have been the outcome if secrecy had been maintained and all landings had been at unexpected points.

In the main our men had been up against the impossible and what they did accomplish was a miracle. Yet those in authority had not realized the enormity of the undertaking. Here is one little sidelight that shows they thought the job was not half the hazard it was. Just before the landing there had been a conference of senior officers on one of the battleships and it so chanced that several of them came aboard my ship for lunch. They all began talking of the plans that had been under discussion—quite openly.

## HOME FROM THE SEA

“Gentlemen,” I said, “if you want to discuss your plans, I’ll go.”

“Oh, no, no, not at all,” was the general outcry. So I stayed and listened.

Now I’m not a soldier, but one thing I gathered from the general talk was that these men of the Twenty-Ninth were going to attempt that landing fully equipped even to the extent of carrying their heavy packs on their backs. It seemed crazy to me.

“Surely,” I interrupted, unable to hide my surprise, “the men are not going to carry their packs!”

“Yes, that’s the order,” I was told.

“But don’t you realize that many will doubtless be shot down in the actual landing, not killed maybe, but wounded. Those packs will be like millstones.”

“That’s the order,” was the unequivocal reply.

And the men carried those packs and hundreds, wounded, were drowned in water not a couple of feet deep. Surely all freedom of action was necessary. Supplies could easily have followed—if we had become masters of the beaches.

And, as a mere spectator, so far as the combatant tactics were concerned, I could never understand why it was that when we had, at such a cost, won a precarious hold on the enemy land, our men were left there to fight it out. There were thousands of troops remaining on board the many ships, yet days went by before another wave was sent in support. Why were a few thousand not landed on the very night of the landing? I know that the Twenty-

Ninth were the only regulars there and very likely it was in the minds of the commanders that when they had cleared the way the less-trained troops should follow. But when disaster threatened so heavily, surely any pre-arranged scheme should have gone by the board and support at once sent to our hard-pressed fellows.

Sunday evening I was ordered to Tenedos to bring up a strong labour party. I was given a secret signal to make on arrival. I made it, but apparently it was too secret. No one took the slightest notice. No reply ; neither did anyone come off to me. And this was war ! At eight o'clock in the morning I considered it was time I sent an officer on shore to tap at their windows. It was noon when the boat returned, and then I was informed that the labour party would come aboard in the afternoon. Only after many hours of impatient delay was I able to get away and return to Cape Helles—to learn that our men had been only just able to withstand the enemy counter-attack on shore.

It had apparently been a narrow shave of being driven back into the sea, and how they avoided that calamity only the Twenty-Ninth and the Marines will ever understand. And Heaven knows, they were modest enough about it. I remember a day or two later a few of them, officers and men, came aboard. I knew them because I had brought them out. Now they were wounded, needing treatment—they got it, oh yes, and a good meal and a tub as well—and they



## HOME FROM THE SEA

asked me quite seriously whether the navy was satisfied with the way the army had done its job at the first landing! Satisfied? I was dumb, and I am dumb still, having no words to express my admiration.

Thousands killed, and now thousands wounded were clamouring for attention. All hospital ships full and still more wounded. The troopships were requisitioned as temporary but unofficial hospitals. They were called Black Carriers. They were.

Through these returning men we heard every phase of the movements on land. The French had taken and evacuated Kum Keli on the opposite side of the Dardanelles—after destroying the guns and emplacements, had been taken across and landed on Gallipoli so that now it was one combined force. The Anzacs were to the north on the western shore. By luck they had landed a little farther than the accurate information held by the enemy had foreshadowed, and so they had missed the worst of the enemy's fire and been able to take the Turks' position in the flank. Now our men were digging in.

What a time they had of it! There was little water for the first few days, food was had only at irregular intervals, they were short of ammunition—so short that the dead were robbed of it. Guns and every blessed stick required had to be landed from ships lying off Helles. I was sending large milk cans ashore to store water—to get which pumping stations had to be rigged up; requests came off even for mirrors to make periscopes. The men had abso-

## WAR—WHY WE FAILED IN GALLIPOLI

lutely nothing and England was 3,000 miles away, with no friendly countries near from which to draw supplies. Egypt and Malta were our handiest bases, and the former was none too secure.

When the sick and wounded did begin to arrive they came by launch, trawler and tug, and all afternoon, night and morning they came—two thousand of them. It was no small task to turn a troopship into a floating hospital at an hour's notice. Our ship's surgeon was the only medical man on board and there was not a single nursing sister or hospital orderly—and the men were in dire need, many of them coming straight from the trenches after only the hurried treatment that could be given at a crowded field-dressing station.

We requisitioned for much-needed conveniences but were told we must do our best. We did. We improvised beds, laying mattresses on sloping boards, and used what medical stores we had—being a Cunarder we carried a certain amount.

The surgeon organized a staff of hospital attendants from the stewards. The purser was his chief aide and the entire crew gave what time could be spared from the duties of the ship. Many operations took place under these difficult conditions, the purser acting as anæsthetist. So we went to Alexandria.

It was some time afterwards that I learned throughout all that time when we and other ships were making dire shift to accommodate and attend to the wounded, a vessel had been lying a few miles out in

## HOME FROM THE SEA

the bay loaded with all manner of medical requisites. It was ten days before someone in authority remembered her existence !

At Alexandria I requested proper medical assistance and nurses and several army medical officers and sisters were attached to the ship thenceforward.

On the way I had painted red crosses on a white ground on the ship's side and made a red-cross flag to fly at the fore. I did not imagine these would be the slightest use actually, but you would hardly credit the psychological effect the signs had on the wounded ; it gave them a feeling of security.

On one voyage from Gallipoli to Alexandria we passed the *Royal Edward* going in the opposite direction and carrying troops to the peninsula. Imagine my astonishment when two days later in Alexandria I was talking to the M.O. and others by the purser's office when the latter informed me that the purser of the *Royal Edward* was in his office. Would I like to see him? I went in and asked him how they had managed to make such a quick return. To my horror he told me that the *Royal Edward* had been torpedoed an hour after passing us and only about 400 men out of the 1,600 on board had been saved. He himself had been picked up by another troopship returning to Alexandria. It was war, both on land and sea.

After two months' knocking about between Gallipoli, Alexandria and Mudros carrying wounded, stores and so on, I was ordered home. The ship

was full of wounded and sick, hundreds of them "cot" cases, and about two thousand in all. By now we had become quite settled down as a Black Carrier and once again, in Mudros, I had the red cross on the ship's sides and the flag at the fore. The Naval Transport Officer assured me—what I really knew—that such precautions were useless; we should receive no consideration thereby at the hands of enemy submarines, but I had received evidence of the moral good it had upon the wounded.

He said no more. But on arriving at Malta I was ordered to paint out the red crosses and haul down the flag.

Consternation at once among the wounded, but I had no choice other than to obey. The medical officer came to me later and said painting out the crosses had produced very ill effects in a number of cases and couldn't I get permission to retain them?

"No," I answered, and gave him a good solid stare and a very perceptible wink. "But we shall be at sea in a few hours and out of sight of land," I added, and before dark the crosses were painted in again and the Red Cross flag was flying.

But my little schemes were all upset at Gibraltar. Here we had to take on board 120 bluejackets who were returning to England. These were perfectly fit combatants and so away went the red crosses, down came the Red Cross flag—and up went the temperatures of the wounded. Still we were nearing home; that was something. And at last they were

## HOME FROM THE SEA

disembarked, safe, if, alas, not sound some of them, at Southampton.

I was back in the Eastern Mediterranean when that second landing on Gallipoli was undertaken. How different it was from the first ! Nobody knew anything. Instead of advertising just where each battalion was to be expected, the enemy must have been in the dark just because every man, save the highest officers, had no idea even the night before at what point they were to make their attempt.

CHAPTER VII  
SIDELIGHTS ON "THE SHOW"

AN entire army asked one question as soon as it was known there was to be a new landing. That question was: "Where?" It dominated everything else. With memories of those tragic beaches clear in mind, either by actual experience or from very first-hand information, they wondered, these fine fellows who were to make that second attempt, whether the Powers-that-be had some different plan to try. Was it to be the old spots? Were they to be thrown into the face of ready-placed guns, or this time were the spies to be outwitted and so afford some real chance of success?

No one was allowed to know. The secret was wonderfully kept. But, one remembers the saying that it is pretty useless locking the stable door after the horse has got out. If only this admirable secrecy had been maintained before the first landing . . .

There was a colonel actually leaving my ship to go by tender to lead his men ashore—as near to the zero hour as that. He had no hint as to where he was going to land. He asked me if I knew.

"No," I told him, for, of course, I was as much

in the dark as anyone ; naturally, it was no concern of mine.

Just as he left, however, it so happened a messenger informed me that a captain was in my cabin. I went to him and he turned out to be the skipper of the tender that lay alongside, waiting to take the troops. After greetings I ventured to ask :

“ Do you know where these men are landing ? ”

He looked round mysteriously. His glance asked if there was any likelihood of anyone listening. I shook my head smilingly.

“ May I show you in your chart-room ? ”

“ Yes.”

He did, and so as I watched the men leave entirely in the dark as to where they were going, even their own colonel, I had the knowledge, but, of course, could not impart it. “ Suvla Bay ” I could have told them—Suvla with its heroic story, its tempestuous struggle ; Suvla that will live in history, though that morning it was a name practically unknown to the world.

I did not see that landing. Overnight I was ordered off to Mudros taking wounded—always wounded !—and so to England.

To me, very largely, memories of the War are memories of wounded. That perhaps is why that old parrot cry of making England a country fit for heroes to live in rings in my mind to-day with cynical insistence. I think of them with their brave eyes—and I look about England to-day with its two and a

## SIDELIGHTS ON "THE SHOW"

half million of unemployed. How can I resist the comparison? If you had spent the long tormented hours I did with the men who were broken in the conflict, you, too, would wonder how it is those who guide the destinies of this country have failed so dismally in their duties to the sufferers. Was it all only easily-compiled catch-phrasing? Was it all done for the sake of the placemen at home who talked but did not fight? It makes one despair of the politicians; it makes one think they are fiery-tongued instead of sympathetic, using common sense and understanding to mend the sickness of the land. To them, as alas! to many superior officers, it was all a "show"; rather a game—and often a struggle for decoration and promotion.

On two occasions I chanced to hear of officers in charge of bags containing decorations. The first was off Gallipoli and one was a little impressed realizing that, amid the holocaust of that campaign, organization was sufficiently embracing to assure the presence out there of these rewards. I thought of the men freezing, baking, starved, soaked, putting up their gallant show on those shores of death, and it is to be feared the proportion of decorations that went ashore and those that remained at head-quarters afloat was hardly a fair criterion of valour. The same fact was noticeably in evidence in the second case—that of a bag of decorations sent by the French for distribution among the troops in Salonica.

Not that the fighting men worried; the vast



majority of them, I am sure, never thought of reward or of wounds.

Often and often I noticed on the many trips I made home with wounded from the East that, wherever a man lay with lost leg or arm, he was usually the centre of the highest spirits. They were going home, what did a limb matter? Home—it was Mecca to them. Where are they now, some of them? Looking for the job that is always round the corner.

The Navy had a habit of thought—that it was their show. They felt the interference of others was irksome, even though that “interference” was necessary to their existence. I am thinking naturally of my own service. They definitely looked on us as inferiors. I have seen master mariners sitting in an outer office of the Naval Transport Offices waiting for orders as meekly as panel patients in a consulting-room. These captains of ships were waiting to carry thousands of troops or stores to the scene of operation, yet they had to sit there pending the convenience of some official. Some of us adopted the method of saying :

“If So-and-so is engaged, I shall be at . . . Please send and inform me when he is at liberty.”

It was all so unnecessary. Only towards the end of hostilities did the Navy wake up to the fact that we knew our business far better than they knew it. I am not saying a word here about naval operations, please understand. On the contrary, I yield to none in my admiration of their fighting qualities, but their experience did not include the running of a big liner with

all its complicated organization. And if ever such an emergency arises again when England has to mobilize her resources for defence, I hope the authorities have learned sufficient to take the Merchant Service into their confidence and regard it as a very necessary and honourable adjunct to the other services.

When the first of the big merchant ships, the *Olympic*, was commissioned—that is, became an auxiliary cruiser mounting six guns—the Admiralty, we heard, wanted to put one of their officers in command, the ship's captain being subservient to him and becoming merely navigating officer. The captain of the *Olympic* objected, and I am glad to say that he was eventually upheld in his attitude. When the *Mauretania* was commissioned no question was raised, and I remained in charge. Incidentally I believe I am correct in saying that I am the only captain who sailed under all the four ensigns—the White of the Royal Navy, the Red of the Merchant Service, the Blue of the R.N.R. and the Admiralty of the hospital ships.

There were many dug-out naval officers in charge of Transport and Harbour Offices and, being asked to do jobs for which they were not trained, it was only to be expected they would make a mess of them.

A great amount of friction and bad feeling was caused through unnecessary arrogance in the Transport Offices. An old officer would be dug out and put in control. Within a few minutes of donning his uniform, up would go his eye-glass, and from that

instant all civilian service would be subordinate to his own importance.

But neither service could exist without the other. Each is the complement of the other in war and peace. And was it not the Merchant Navy that gave birth to the Royal Navy? Many of the old sea captains of renown were essentially merchant-men, gentlemen adventurers who fought their sea fights in extending this empire of ours. It was these men who held their Letters of Marque, giving them power to fight and exact reprisals against foreign foes. Not that the merchant navy during the war desired to share in navy strategy or operations; of course not. But they did justify more friendly consideration. For instance, a set of pains and penalties that would befall a master if he ignored certain orders was published in the public press. Wouldn't it have been better if it had been pointed out sympathetically the reason for such orders with a request for co-operation? And as to our own end of the business, they did not possess the necessary knowledge to control our work. To mention only one thing. They had no conception of what demurrage meant. It was pitiful to see the ships—dozens of them—lying up in Alexandria when they were urgently needed at home for trooping.

They didn't seem to worry about waste, either of material or of time. If a ship went East, there it remained until someone back in Whitehall remembered it and sent orders for its further occupation. Often that someone forgot the ship for weeks—prob-

## SIDELIGHTS ON "THE SHOW"

ably wondered whether it was still afloat if he thought of it at all. Anyhow, there the ship lay and its officers loitered, waiting. Everything was done by order—that is the naval mind, naturally enough; everything must radiate from the Admiralty which was a sort of centre of some huge web. If one of the threads broke the ship at the other end of it was as good as a derelict.

The congestion of shipping out East indeed grew so serious that certain people at home gradually became alarmed at the state of affairs, and this resulted in a commission being sent out to look into the question on the spot. It was headed by a prominent shipping magnate, who was armed with full powers to act and see that idle ships got released and were sent to carry out the work for which they were intended.

The congestion soon ended.

The whole campaign in Gallipoli, as far as I could see it, was an example of weak organization. Wastage everywhere. If a lighter was filled with supplies for shore and, as was the case not infrequently, it was badly loaded, over it went. It didn't matter. There were other lighters and more supplies—that seemed to be the prevailing notion.

I feel very keenly about this matter. To a man trained as we are trained to waste nothing and especially time, to be up to the minute because, if one is not, a rival is going to score—which is simply applying ordinary business efficiency to the job of running ships—it was irritating to see the lack of method that

## HOME FROM THE SEA

grew up under the inefficient emergency control. I maintain that the Merchant Navy—and the service is grateful to the King for giving it that title—should be incorporated in the active services and not left in the lurch as it was during the war. Germany was far too wise to adopt such water-tight methods. Every enemy skipper in the world knew all about the outbreak of war ; before they left their home ports they were taken into the Government's confidence and many liners were carrying guns and ammunition before the actual declaration of war.

Not only the navy, the army also were inclined to place too small an importance on the merchant ships of England. One night in my cabin off Salonica several army officers were dining with me. While we were talking there, news came that a 12,000-ton vessel, the *Caledonian*, of the Anchor Line had been torpedoed out in the Mediterranean. Granted at that time it was no uncommon thing ; indeed, it was to our view becoming a dangerously regular proceeding ; not, you understand, because entirely of the loss of sailors' lives, though that was equally a matter of war casualties, but because, with more than one ship being lost every day, things were getting a bit desperate. But one colonel in my cabin that night pooh-poohed the disaster.

“ Only a merchant ship,” he said scoffingly. “ That doesn't matter,” and dismissed the event as though it should not interfere with our bright conversation.

"What do you mean?" I put in. "Doesn't matter?" I'm afraid I showed a bit huffy.

"Of course to you, well yes, it's up your street, so to speak. But I was thinking of the campaign in the big sense. That ship was not a fighting ship and it's the fighting units that count."

I turned to him a surprised and, I dare say, condemning face.

"Who brought you here?" I asked him. "Who brought those men fighting on the peninsula? Who carried their supplies, fed them on the route out? What would you do with your wounded if there were no merchant ships? Drown 'em?"

I hope he saw—I think he did—that we were a very necessary cog in the big wheel, so vital a cog, indeed, that the wheel would have jammed if all our shipping had been put out of action.

That is why I say there must be a scheme of incorporation if ever again—which God forbid!—England should be engaged in a life-and-death struggle. And can we, however our hopes may lie, shut our eyes to the possibility? Not when there is the shadow of Russia lengthening across the globe. They are civilization's enemies, and I for one hate to see this country having any dealings with them. Our politicians helped them once when they were no longer our allies—I refer to that disastrous venture to Archangel, done perhaps to restore the monarchy, in which millions of money and thousands of lives were sacrificed for nothing. They are surely less our friends

to-day with their indented labour and dumped merchandise keeping our own men out of jobs. Their soiled fingers are feeling into every country. Italy has told them to keep clear, France will have nothing to do with them, and America is bucking at their compulsory labour. Those are good examples for us. But this is a digression, used only by way of illustration to show that the world is not so much at peace that we can afford to ignore the possibilities of a future when we must again be ready. And should that moment break, it is looking at things only from my own angle as a master mariner to express the fervent hope that those of my own profession will find a more ready sympathy, a more eager hand held out to them to co-operate in the job that will face us.

I could quote a hundred instances of how the mercantile marine was looked upon as an inferior service, and I hope our record in the War has assured our men of no similar treatment in the future. Looking back now, it is difficult to realize the point of view. Which reminds me of a slight contretemps that took place in my cabin once when H.M.S. *Mauretania* was in New York. We were bringing troops to England. The evening before sailing the general staff came aboard, and over dinner the general happened to remark upon possible dangers of the crossing. If an eventuality arose he announced his intention of adopting certain methods.

“That’s up to me,” I told him.

## SIDELIGHTS ON "THE SHOW"

He looked as though I had offended his dignity, and intimated that he was in command.

"Of the troops yes," I acceded, "but not of the ship. If you look you will find we wear the White Ensign."

I wouldn't dream of interfering with the military organization, neither would I let him interfere with the ship's management. But there it was; I think he regarded the vessel as a sort of colossal taxi and its commander as its chauffeur!

But I am pleased to say that was the only occasion that I personally ever had to insist on my authority as commanding officer of my ship. And I must point out in this connexion that the general in question was prompted by America's practice of putting a troopship under the command of the senior military officer for all purposes save that of navigation.

It took two and a half years of the late war for the Admiralty to realize we knew our job; they should start next time right at the word "go," regarding us as a branch concern—partners, as indispensable as transport and communications are to the army.

While on this subject I am reminded that once in New York there were those who sought to impose their limited ideas on me. I would ask you to bear in mind that altogether I carried over one hundred thousand troops during the war with the loss of only one man, who shot himself. I was jealous of my record, tremendously glad of it and, if I may add, put much of it down to what I called at the outset my belief that



## HOME FROM THE SEA

there is a divinity that shapes our ends. Well, on this occasion we were bringing over the vanguard of the American Army. And I must interpolate here, in case the opportunity does not recur, what a splendid lot of fellows they were, officers and men. On one occasion—in 1917 in the *Saxonia* when crossing from New York—four American generals were in my cabin. Were they of the type, as many a Britisher is apt to picture them, who “swanked,” intimating that they were about to finish our little war for us? Certainly not; the very reverse. Those four generals said to me: “We are as schoolboys in this business; we are coming over wanting to learn this new art of warfare from your fellows who have the experience.” They knew; they understood the sort of fighting ahead of them was not to be learned in the textbooks. All they brought beyond what those textbooks had taught them was an unbounded energy, enthusiasm and willingness to learn.

These were the men I was to carry that voyage. They were all on board when the Chief Engineer came to me with the report that our steering-gear had gone back on us. It had been carried away!

“All right, I’ll get in touch with the proper authorities,” I told him. It was nearly six o’clock then and we were due to sail at 6.30. I at once informed the senior naval officer that we could not proceed.

“You’ll have to go,” he said. “You’ve got emergency steering-gear, haven’t you?”

“That is not good enough for me to cross the Atlantic with,” I said.

SIDELIGHTS ON "THE SHOW"

"You must sail," was his reply.

"Give it me in writing," I demanded.

"You must sail," he answered stubbornly.

"Very well ; give me a cruiser and two destroyers to escort me over—or your sailing orders in writing."

"Nonsense."

"Then we stay here pending repairs."

"We'll get the best experts in New York to look the gear over." And down they went and made their examination.

"We consider the emergency steering-gear quite sufficient," was their verdict.

"Will you guarantee that it will carry me to England?" I asked them.

"No," they admitted.

"Then I shall not go." And I didn't.

It took eight days to make the repairs. The troops were dispatched in other ships, and, mind you, if there had been no other ships and no one but myself to rely on, I might have been more inclined to take the risk, for, after all, it was war-time. But it was not necessary to run what I considered a grave risk with thousands of men on board—they were in my care ; there was only my experienced view between them and possible disaster.

We got away at length. The day before sailing the Superintendent came on board and said : "I want you to try that emergency steering-gear."

"I'm going to," I assured him. "I intend to run it from the dock side until we get to sea."

## HOME FROM THE SEA

But we had not reached quarantine when it jammed !

There was a lot of fog about and we had to come to an anchor. We were in narrow waters and it took a certain amount of time to change over. Anything might have happened in that fog. The conditions lasted, too, until we were well out to sea. Then we started to repair that emergency gear.

When it was finished we were just entering the Mersey ! Jove, but I was glad I had held out and not risked it.

Passengers to-day may not know that a Cunarder never leaves a harbour without everything essential being thoroughly tested. It was during the test that day in New York that the gear was carried away. Whistles, telephones, lights, as well as the engine-room contrivances—everything is thoroughly tried out.

There are times, even then, when things go wrong. It was so cold once in New York harbour that we found we couldn't blow the ship's whistle. The valves were frozen in the blizzard that was blowing. I think that was the occasion when I was unable to return the signal of one of our patrol ships who were on look-out for German vessels leaving New York before America came in. I couldn't make a sign. The weather was so bad the Morse lamp fused ; we tried the binnacle lamp ; that failed. The whistle wouldn't sound and there we were, mute, while the naval ship's searchlight lay on us inquiringly. However, he didn't open fire, recognizing us, and later

SIDELIGHTS ON " THE SHOW "

round in Halifax I made my apologies and explanations. So I was not shot for non-compliance with orders !

They were, of course, strenuous days for us as for every one else. It was in the *Saxonia* just before the time America came in that I spent the longest period of my career on the bridge. We left New York one Thursday, and there was dense fog all the way to Halifax, where we arrived on Monday afternoon. That was a pretty long spell, three and a half days of strained attention with never a break. At Halifax, after coming to an anchor, the captain of the escort cruiser came on board.

" When can you leave ? " he asked.

" Give me an hour and a half," I replied, and he said : " All right, signal when you are ready."

Never was a bath more enjoyed—it was the height of luxury. I had a civilized lunch, got into fresh clothes and when the ninety minutes had elapsed I sent my signal.

" Carry out previous orders," came back, and we weighed anchor.

With the exception of that break I never left the bridge for eight days, the chief reason being that we were adopting the method of zigzagging, and that was the first time it had been done in convoy. It meant a lot of complicated signalling and station keeping and I thought it was my job to see it through. This was in 1917.

But to return to the Mediterranean. Later on I

was to take the *Mauretania* out there as a full-fledged hospital ship, but meanwhile the *Alaunia* was bringing the wounded back in their thousands. The second landing seemed to supply as many as the first and some of the cases were very pitiful, just as it cheered one's heart to see fellows all broken who made light of their troubles and smiled through.

They were full of stories. One I remember concerned the Anzacs. The latter had literally fallen agape one day when along their lines came an apparition in the shape of a gorgeous youth who looked to be straight out of Oxford and dressed up as for a stage part. There was no dirt on his uniform and he wore his red-banded cap at a rakish angle. His boots were speckless and in his eye was a monocle!

The colonials took this as something sent by the little gods of mischief for their especial delight.

"Haw haw, beastly mornin', wot?" they cried after him, and more pointed remarks inferring, as an instance, their inquisitiveness as to whether his "Ma" knew he was out.

The staff ornament took not the slightest notice.

"Say, Clarence, d'you know there's a war on?"

Still no notice rewarded them, but they did not mean to be beaten by sheer indifference, however well the pose—if it were a pose—was maintained.

They dropped everything and lined the road and down the avenue of smirking faces the officer strolled. They had stuck identity discs in their eyes and circled thumb and forefinger over them in imitation of

SIDELIGHTS ON "THE SHOW"

monocles and "haw-hawed" and generally made fun. When the officer had run the gauntlet to the end he stopped, seeming to notice this parade of ridicule for the first time. His steady eye ran them over from behind its glass.

"You fellows think you're mighty smart," he said in unruffled voice. "Then see if you can do this." And he took the monocle from its place, threw it up in the air and caught it in his eye again. They gasped; the officer turned quietly, and as he walked away they gave him a rousing cheer.

One of the sad cases brings to mind the picture of a fellow who never spoke, who went about as in some dream, his head always down on his chest, his eyes vacant. He was a shell-shock case and there was only one person on board who could do anything with him. That person was his nurse. He was a very fine musician and whenever there was a concert on board he was something of a star turn. But he never realized what he did. When the men wanted him to perform, that gentle nurse of his would just lay her hand on his shoulder and guide him to the piano. It almost seemed as though some telepathic current of thought passed between them, for under her unspoken suasion he would sit at the instrument and play divinely. Even while thus engaged he seemed entirely lost to his surroundings and just went on until the nurse touched him again. Then he stopped, his head went down as if tired and he rose at her wordless bidding and returned into the mental mists wherein

he lived. When in harbour I witnessed his performances. I shall never forget his eyes. They had looked on the awfulness that was Gallipoli.

I always thought what a vivid glare of truth shot into the absurdity of war when I saw the wounded enemy. We did not see many ; there were not many prisoners on my ship. One Turk was brought once, and it was pathetic to look at him. He was in wretched shape and was suffering from some very grievous wound ; we did not know what at first. He lay on the deck unable to speak, too ill indeed to speak, and some of our men went to him and offered cigarettes. He took them ; enmity was over ; there is a common feeling in common wounds.

When at last the doctor arrived and examined him we knew the poor man had no chance. They tried their best to set him right and that necessitated the amputation of a leg that had become gangrenous. He died in a few hours and we were faced with the Turkish religious belief that at all hazard a man's whole body must be buried in one place. So he followed that severed leg of his—overboard.

The few Turkish prisoners that were brought generally had English gold on them and it made one wonder whether that small wealth had not once belonged to our own men. Thus we got peeps of the horror. It was an awful mess, and we knew that our fellows were on land without maps, and at times in such confusion that it was not an unknown thing for our own guns to fire on them.

## CHAPTER VIII

### H.M.H.S. MAURETANIA

I SHALL never forget the day I took over the *Mauretania*—the famous flyer I was to command for eleven years and which was to create, while under my command, the record for the Atlantic run and keep the Blue Riband for so long.

That day was in September, 1915. I was in Liverpool and received orders to take her over on her arrival. She didn't put in for a week, having had a bad time in the Mediterranean. When she entered the Mersey I was on the dock and waited while a tender brought her captain ashore. We met on the landing-stage. He had been advised that I was succeeding him, and after greetings he waved a hand to the ship out in the river and just remarked, "There she is ; take her," as though he were handing me a large-sized packet of trouble. I couldn't help laughing aloud. But I was proud to have her, though not then guessing how great a part of my life she was destined to become.

When I went aboard her the next day I found she was being fitted out as a hospital ship—the pukka thing ; no eyewashing or winking necessary. I admit withal that I had a slight feeling of disappointment. We



## HOME FROM THE SEA

were not then tired of the chase—of the excitement of wondering whether we should get through or this time have a tin fish in our sides. One naturally imagined a hospital ship was immune from attack. The thrills were to come, however.

We left Liverpool with a full medical staff and the ship transformed into as fine a hospital as you could find anywhere on shore. Very different from the days when we were Black Carriers. Now we had forty medical officers, seventy-two nursing sisters and a hundred and twenty orderlies (later about one hundred and fifty), all thoroughly trained. No improvised accommodation for suffering men and no scratch supplies for dealing with difficult operations. Here were beautifully-fitted operating theatres, X-ray rooms, real hospital wards and every single thing in the way of appliance that ingenuity could devise.

Instead of proceeding in complete darkness we were a blaze of light with a row of green lamps all round the ship and illuminated red crosses amidships at night-time. The old Black Carriers were painted black, the *Mauretania* was now a spotless white save for one broad green band round the hull and the yellow of the funnels. The Red Cross flags flew from the masthead for all the world to see. We were carrying wounded men and doing nothing else and, in view of what happened later, I want to say here as clearly as it is possible to put it into print that never once did we in the merest detail depart from the strict letter of the law. We never carried combatants, never

conveyed abroad any sort of material other than medical supplies.

Yet at the end of 1915 the enemy decided to sink all ships at sight, including hospital ships.

It was wanton murder, and I don't know any particular form of frightfulness adopted by them that was more revolting. They gave an excuse, of course. They said we were carrying combatants and combatant stores. We were not—take that from me as the literal truth down to its minutest meaning! It is being kind to assume that the enemy confused the *pukka* hospital ships with the Black Carriers, but even there I assure every reader, whatever his nationality, that the Black Carriers of which I had charge never pretended to be what they were not. True, at times, I had red crosses painted on the sides and flew a Red Cross flag, but only when we carried wounded *and no one else*. If we had a mere half-dozen combatant troops on board, the red crosses came out and the flag was lowered. Of course it was mere idle excuse for the enemy to pretend ships like the *Mauretania* were taking any sort of part in hostilities. We were a floating hospital, pure and simple.

We even tried to convince—and indeed must have convinced—the enemy that we were only going about on our lawful occasions.

We always had to call at Naples (Italy had not then come in) to coal, and on one occasion it was decided to invite all the enemy consuls and acting consuls on board to examine us. They came to dinner and I

## HOME FROM THE SEA

threw the entire ship open to them. Every man on board was paraded for inspection ; packages and bales were opened to let our guests see we carried only medical stores. I told them they could go anywhere about the ship they liked and ask any question of any body. They all declared they were satisfied that we were no more than what we purported to be and stated they would forward reports to their headquarters.

But a little later the huge *Britannic* was sunk in the Ægean, and she was a hospital ship and nothing else, just as we were.

They knew all right. They were quite aware their reason was an excuse. They understood we were only carrying wounded. What they aimed at hospital ships for was just because quite conceivably some of the wounded they took home would get well again and once more become part of the fighting army against them. Or even worse—merely to strike terror into the civilian population prompting an eagerness for peace.

Still we did not run the risk of being mistaken as once we were as a Black Carrier. One time we left Mudros late, after dark. Going through the Zea Channel in the Ægean, we passed close to one of our own ships. I afterwards heard that as they sighted us it was touch and go whether they opened fire on us or not. The “not” won, for which praise be, not only for us in the *Alaunia*—that was the vessel—but also for the other ship. There would have been a pretty song if they had sunk us !

The day of sailing from Mudros was always a very busy and exacting time. Numerous military medical officers—of high and lesser degree—would be on board to assure themselves all arrangements were satisfactory, others seeing off departing colleagues. On one occasion I had left my berth and was streaming down the harbour when two officers asked permission to speak to me. Permission granted, they coolly requested that they be put on shore as they had only come off to say good-bye to some sick and wounded brother officers! Too late. I gave my apologies and reminded them that I hadn't any convenience for putting them on shore, and should we not be able to get the vessel on patrol duty outside the harbour to come alongside I assured them they would be taken to England.

I fancy they had a nervous spell and I thought it rather served them right. Their notions of discipline would do with a jog. They had received all necessary warning to leave, but evidently expected the ship to wait their convenience. However, we were able to signal the patrol vessel to come alongside and so they got back to their duties.

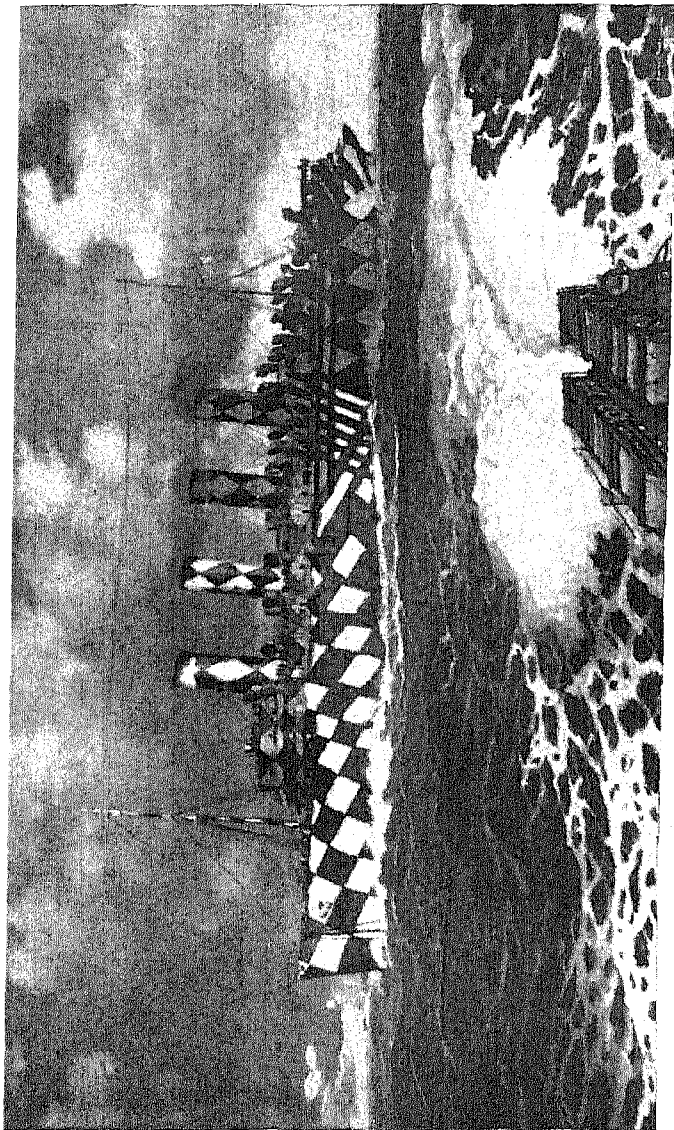
The *Mauretania* continued to evacuate the sick and wounded until February, 1916, by which time Gallipoli was a thing of the past. Kitchener had been out and decided on the evacuation. Maybe there would have been a different story if he had been out a year previously and organized the landing!

We brought the last lot home, and I recollect one

## HOME FROM THE SEA

outstanding figure among that crowd. He was a colonel, and ten months before he had landed off my ship—the *Alaunia*. He was then a captain in the South Wales Borderers, a fine, well-set-up, typical military officer. What a change in him when he came back! He had been on the peninsula through the whole terrible performance, from start to finish. I didn't recognize him. Months of constant struggle, fatigue, fighting, hunger, thirst, sand-flies and other wild beasts of smaller dimensions, the shock of constant thunderous noise, not to mention the loss of practically all his colleagues, had entirely changed him. When a man sick, hollow-cheeked, weary mentally and physically, came to me and handed me a card, I just couldn't believe it was the same officer I had said good-bye to the night before that first landing. You can be sure he had every comfort and attention the ship could provide.

It was a happy ship. I used to go the rounds sometimes with Colonel Frank Brown, R.A.M.C., the medical commanding officer, and was always amazed at the cheeriness of even those who were in most wretched plight. Disablement, pain, misery, seemed outside their consideration; the only thing that occupied their minds was that they were going home—home to Blighty and all that Blighty meant. What do some of them think to-day? They stuck it to the dregs and they heard the grandiloquent promises of security and peace and happiness. Pitiful must have been the disappointment to thousands, and I, for



*By courtesy of the Cunard Line*

**H.M.S. Mauretania IN 1918, CAMOUFLAGED**



one, thinking of the future, find my chief comfort in remembering those men who kept the flag flying from 1914 to 1918 and thinking England can never die while she produces such fellows.

The staff on board was just as wonderful in its way. Often have I seen during bad weather nurses attacked by *mal de mer* dart away and as quickly rush back to their wards to carry on. Those women gave of their best, prepared to risk all in playing their part in the upheaval. They had their reward in seeing some wonderful recoveries on board. Stretcher "cases" were often so benefited by the voyage and the care taken of them that they were up and walking the decks by the time we arrived in Southampton.

By the way, I took the *Mauretania* up the Dardanelles to Constantinople, past Cape Helles, close to the shores of Gallipoli, in 1924 while on a cruise from New York round the Mediterranean. It was interesting to see the change. True, there were the wrecked forts, and one or two sunken vessels, but for the rest all was peace and the government of nature was once again supreme. But several "areas" were seen "Sacred to the memory of . . ." and one's thoughts went back to it all.

We paid off the *Mauretania* on March 1, 1916, and the ship lay at the Cunard buoy in the Sloyne, River Mersey, quietly swinging round to the tide.

For the time being there seemed no chance of her proceeding to sea again, and I took over the *Ivernia*, trooping to the Mediterranean, a busy year with a few



## HOME FROM THE SEA

excitements. Through a fog one day we spied the periscope of an enemy submarine and he had a pot at us. We saw the torpedo break the surface, but the visibility being bad evidently saved us. Just a breathless minute, and we knew the projectile had lost itself somewhere. Then the fog closed in again and we went on our way to Salonica. That was our run all the year—Marseilles, Malta, Alexandria, Salonica. And it was from the latter head-quarters I was able to get my first peep at land warfare.

We were at the time being held as a sort of stand-by ship ready to rush troops and stores by sea to any "appointed place," and while there I was able to make a visit to the front on our Eastern flank. I went round the whole of the Brigade's lines, lunching in a front-line mess. It was close to the Saar, and the Bulgarians were a mile across on the other side while from the sea my old ship the *Grafton* was spitting occasional fire from her 9-2's.

They laughed at me in that mess. A hash made with bully beef was served and my plate brought back to me memories of young days in sailing ships. I had a fleeting picture of the old *Cedric* and the *Redgauntlet* when to us boys the sort of meal before me here marked then a red-letter day. I ate the stuff with relish and, when it was finished: "Have another serving?" queried the Brigadier. There was a smile about his lips, but it changed into surprise—a surprise shared by all the mess when I answered: "Yes, rather—thanks." Of course they were pretty sick of

the sight of the dish which to me was an interesting novelty.

Next day I did one of the things I had wanted to do for a long time—went round the front lines and saw our men in action. I was so enthusiastic that one of the colonels pressed me to outstay the leave I had in order to witness a “little show” that he was staging on the morrow. I wondered then, and I wonder now, whether he was preparing the attack he spoke of as a sort of private performance for my benefit, but anyhow I had to get back to my ship—about a forty-mile motor-run.

It was during that time in Salonica that I was able to satisfy another “wanted to do” I had long entertained—to witness in a submerged submarine the firing of a torpedo and note its movements through the periscope. It was fascinating to be the right end of a tin fish when for months I had been a possible target.

In the bay there was another Cunarder at the time. The captain, surgeon and purser were old friends and we had opportunities for a chat before they left for home. A day after they had sailed I was in my cabin during the afternoon when my old friend the purser came in.

“Great Scot, when did you arrive?” I cried.

“An hour ago,” he replied.

“I didn’t see you come in. Where are you lying?”

“At the bottom,” he said a little solemnly. “We were torpedoed.”

## HOME FROM THE SEA

All over the Mediterranean those sort of tragic episodes were of daily occurrence ; on other seas, too. Another occasion comes to mind. It was when, later, I was in the *Garmania*. That would be in January of 1918. I was taking her to New York and after leaving Liverpool we picked up the *Aurania*, the latest Cunard vessel and not long before under my command. She, too, was bound for America with a few passengers and details.

It was a fine Sunday afternoon off the north coast of Ireland and we were both zigzagging, for enemy submarines were often in that vicinity, because we adopted it for the New York run. We soon left the *Aurania* astern ; she was making a different course from ours and keeping nearer to the coast. The following Sunday we arrived in New York and I reported passing the *Aurania* off the north coast of Ireland and added that she might be expected in the harbour the following morning. A look of astonishment passed over the face of the officials.

“Don’t you know ; haven’t you heard ?” one asked.

“Heard what ?”

“The *Aurania* was torpedoed last Sunday evening.”

It must have been within an hour or so of my seeing the last of her as she dropped astern. The fortune of war indeed—one vessel gone to the bottom, the other only a few miles away escaping, not even knowing, and still doing excellent work to-day.

We knocked about the Mediterranean all 1916

conveying troops, among them many Australians and New Zealanders. And speaking of those colonials I remember one voyage when in Alexandria we took both on board and it was interesting to see them. There were two battalions and they had been rushed from the sandy desert, marching for three days in a broiling sun. They were just whacked when they got on board, so tired out that they dropped as it were in their tracks, flopped on the deck and were immediately lost to the world, huddled everywhere. You'd think some blight had passed over the ship and laid them all out. Only for a few hours. Then a hefty meal and the cool sea air revived them and the next day they were as fine a body of men any commanding officer could wish to have under him. At Marseilles they left us for somewhere on the Western Front.

Meanwhile the *Mauretania* still swung at her buoy in the Mersey and on leaving the south it was decided I should take her up to the Tail of the Bank in the Clyde for greater safety.

Now it is no simple thing to handle a vessel the size of the big modern liners in narrow waters, and I often wonder whether shore people and passengers realize that fact. I'm sure they don't. I have heard them on board complaining as we have come to anchor in thick weather and they have seen smaller vessels nose their way into port. These latter of course can swing about quickly in comparatively small space ; a big ship is very like a great lorry manoeuvring in a country lane. Liners like the *Majestic* and the *Berengaria* need

## HOME FROM THE SEA

most delicate handling coming into port, especially when the channel has an S-shape as at Southampton and the weather is unpropitious. And should any, even slight, disaster befall, the position can very quickly develop towards the danger line.

A disaster befell the *Mauretania* when I set out to take her to the Clyde. It almost seemed that the ship resented leaving Liverpool.

The day was by no means promising ; a south-easterly gale was making up and strong tides running. However, we slipped from our buoy in the Mersey during the afternoon and, dropping down river, anchored, waiting for darkness and the flood-tide.

At about 7 p.m. we were in the act of weighing the port anchor when the cable parted. It was a serious situation, for, the ship not being in a favourable position, we were unable to utilize our starboard anchor. The pilot attempted to turn the ship downstream and, as soon as we could, we let go the starboard anchor to help. That cable also promptly carried away !

We were in midstream and were now pretty helpless save for the tug tender. To her we managed to get our heavy towing hawser. This we hoped would steady the ship, but lo ! the hawser was not equal to the strain and broke.

The ship was unmanageable. We were broadside on, there was a strong spring-tide, and anchored in the river were many ships any of which we might foul. I have compared a big ship in narrow water to a lorry

in a lane ; it was worse that night, for that tide was carrying us at the rate of between  $6\frac{1}{2}$  to  $7\frac{1}{2}$  knots, and remember, the *Mauretania* has a displacement of over 40,000 tons—some boom ! A boom that reached a third of the way across the stream.

We couldn't turn her ; not only because of the gale and the tide and the darkness and the beating rain, but because there were too many other ships about. It was an awkward enough situation, and in the end it was the ship herself who found the best way out. She drifted on to a comfortable sandbank and, as it were, sat down to await better conditions.

We obtained tug assistance, and at the right moment she came easily off, we turned down river and proceeded to sea. There was nothing else we could do ; it was impossible to return to the buoy and the trip to the Clyde had to be abandoned as we had no anchors. So I put to sea and cruised about waiting for daylight. Even then we could not make the buoy owing to the heavy weather, and so had to put into Gladstone Dock, where we awaited the recovery of our anchors and had them bent on again.

It was sheer good fortune that night that we did not crash into half a dozen ships as we drifted—almost 800 feet of hull sweeping up the river on the incoming tide. That evening proved too strenuous for our pilot ; it was the last time ever he went on to a ship's bridge.

One satisfactory aspect of the affair was that we inconvenienced nobody but ourselves.

## HOME FROM THE SEA

Occasionally, of course, unavoidable delays do cause an upsetting of personal arrangements. Sir Malcolm Campbell had such an experience a short time ago, but being a good sport he understood the situation, less concerned than the thousands on shore who waited to greet him on his return from winning the world's land speed record.

On a previous occasion he had travelled with me, and I have seldom met a man who is a better "mixer"; jolly, frank, so natural recounting his experiences with a sort of modest fluency that makes the good conversationalist. He would laugh lightly while you, the listener, thrilled at some of the hair-breadth escapes he recounted. One I recall. He was driving at some terrific rate, I can't remember exactly what, but, you know, one of those little excursions of his which make an express train seem like a crawling caterpillar, when in a flash he was faced with two desperate and slim chances to avoid certain death. The alternatives were a bunch of sand-dunes or the sea.

"I chose your good old sea," he said with a laugh. "It seemed the best type of buffer available at the moment."

But to the return to the *Mauretania* which we left waiting to go to the Clyde.

The second attempt succeeded, though the fog was so thick that we saw nothing all the way from Liverpool until we became aware of several drifters dragging for mines in the channel of the Clyde. However, I

saw the ship at length securely moored and reported to the Company and the Naval Transport Officer. A submarine course at Chatham filled in several weeks, and then I was appointed to the *Saxonia*, which I took to New York, there to find that "America was in." I started to carry troops at once.

In November we were engaged to bring across 3,500 Chinese labourers. On the way out we had called at Halifax, and we returned to that port on the return journey. During the intervening fortnight an ammunition ship had blown up and stirred the world with the horror of destruction it occasioned. Half the town was blown to bits.

Well do I recall the consternation in New York the night we had the news. It was blowing a blizzard, the snow and the cold were as severe as I had ever known, yet within a very short time a relief train had left New York with nurses, doctors and all manner of hospital equipment, together with food and clothing. It was a memorable instance of organization, a never-to-be-forgotten example of what America could do in face of almost impossible conditions. Several trains followed the first and when, later on, we were at Halifax, there was nothing too good to be said for the Americans who had rushed to help the stricken town, undoubtedly saving many lives and endless suffering.

Our Chinks were a fairly well-behaved crowd, but on one occasion they broke out.

A room in the after part of the ship was used to stow



bread as soon as it was baked—20,000 cobs a day. About ten o'clock one morning word came along to me that the Chinamen had broken into this store. It suggested an ugly situation, for if the entire 3,500 of them got together they could have taken the ship. Quick action was certainly called for. I sent word to their officers (white) and myself raced to the scene of disorder. Bedlam reigned. The room was filled with wild yellow fellows, scratching, scrambling, looting. My arms and legs got busy before I could break a way into the place, and though the main body was thus taken by surprise in the rear, the crowd turned and showed no sort of respect for authority. Gold braid or not, they launched an attack on me and the few helpers I had, and I dare not think what might have happened if the officers had not been pretty slick in getting together and making a determined rush from the other side.

Little troubles sprang up most voyages. Some of our own men got a bit out of hand now and then. Once it was a complaint about margarine served—a commodity they themselves had chosen to have. They were a bit ungrateful about that, I must say, for this was the period when strict food-rationing was in practice at home, and yet these fellows were not affected by it, getting their usual peace-time allowances. I was a bit huffed at them, especially when they persisted and got troublesome, going so far as to threaten to refuse duty. I had the men up and pointed out the childishness of their attitude, but they

wouldn't listen to reason. So I ordered them back to their work, reminding them that there were over a couple of thousand bayonets on board, and that if my words failed I shouldn't hesitate to use more "pointed" persuasion. I'm glad to say the bayonets were not required in the argument; indeed, the men ended with a round of laughter and we had a perfectly happy ship afterwards.

There was a day in Mudros when I had to go so far as to have a squad of soldiers lined up on deck, because certain members of the crew had in fact refused duty—they were annoyed at being set some task when they had expected a spot of leave, but it was a job that had to be done—and I meant that it should be performed.

When the soldiers were lined up with their rifles loaded with live cartridges I paraded the recalcitrant members of the crew with their backs to the bulkhead. Then I told them frankly what their conduct meant in time of war, and that I shouldn't hesitate to use the sternest methods. Whether they thought I was bluffing I don't know, but it needs a plucky man to call a bluff while he looks down a barrel of a loaded rifle.

The job was performed.

There are always grumblers in a company of men several hundred strong. Once I had a complaint that food was bad in quantity and quality and cooking. I knew that complaint was not justified, so instead of argument I ordered a table in the first-class dining-

## HOME FROM THE SEA

room to be set with the same cutlery, plates and so on that the men had. It was all very clean and properly laid out. Then I instructed two men from each department to come to the saloon at 11.30 and went down to meet them. I ordered the meal to be served just as it would have been in their own mess. It was, and I sampled every dish. Of course, it was all thoroughly good.

“Is this exactly what you get in your own mess?” I asked.

They admitted it was. Then I pointed out their trouble—they didn't bother to have the meal properly served up. Their tablecloths were not clean, nor their crockery nor their cutlery. The fault was their own, not the Company's. I thought it well to reduce several of their surplus allowances and then they saw the justice of it. There were no more complaints.

Sailors especially love to grouse. Once when in sail the skipper was in the habit of bringing his wife along on voyages, and she was always full of compassion for the “poor fellows” before the mast. One Sunday they came aft to see the captain. The old complaint—bad food, bad cooking. The captain said he would look into it. He consulted his wife. Under her gentle suasion he decided to give the crew a treat next Sunday. This consisted of several fat geese, the cooking of which was superintended by the captain's wife. She and the cook did their best, and then sat down waiting for the applause. It did not eventuate. Instead they heard a heated argument going on for-

H.M.H.S. MAURETANIA

ward and one of the officers strolled that way to see what was the matter. The men were grumbling !

“ Do you think,” cried one in disgust, “ they would have given us geese if they could have eaten them themselves—*us* ? Not likely ! ”

## CHAPTER IX

### H.M.S. *TUBER ROSE*

IN 1918 the *Mauretania* was commissioned and armed as an auxiliary cruiser, and once again I was on her bridge.

The first voyage was made to New York and it was a record--of slowness ; she took over eight days to make the passage. From the time we left our escort of destroyers off the north-west of Ireland, we experienced a series of westerly gales with tremendous seas which delayed us. Before we moored in New York, indeed, we had an attack of what is known as "coal fever." The *Mauretania* at that time was fuelled with coal and, naturally enough, there is little room to spare for much more than the necessary quantity to make the crossing. On this occasion, being half as long again as usual on the trip, we were down to the dregs. As a matter of fact, when we were at last putting into port, the stokers were scraping the bunkers for sufficient power to conclude the journey. And during that same period our colleagues on the *Aquitania* were in even worse plight. They were using brooms to get the last traces of coal for the boilers. Another few hours and they would have been stranded.

The *Aquitania* had been commissioned and also the *Olympic*, so the three large liners were under the White Ensign, the Cunard ships making New York, for American troops, and the *Olympic* mostly Halifax for the Canadians. My ship in all conveyed about 35,000 U.S. troops, including the last uniformed men to leave, while also we landed the first to return after the Armistice.

Speaking of coal. It was on that return voyage that we were supplied with fuel of a greatly inferior quality. It was quite a mistake, but it worried us because we were able to steam only nineteen knots instead of our customary twenty-five. We picked up a bit as we neared Ireland because the ship was getting lighter, but every one on board was thankful when we sighted our escort, seeing that 1918 was a pretty tough year regarding the submarine menace, and the *Mauretania* would have been a fine feather in the cap of any enemy submarine commander.

Perhaps it was as well that all the time we were armed we never were called upon to defend our lives by gunfire. Once we sighted a periscope and were fired at, but the fog closed in and the enemy submerged before we could bring the guns to bear on him. Those guns were not of the latest pattern, and the four mounted on the forecastle were under water half the time in bad weather. We were very fortunate all through ; even when during that year influenza was carrying off men by the scores both on board ship and in the training camps in America,

## HOME FROM THE SEA

we never had a case. Yet every voyage we carried 5,000 officers and men and in addition had a ship's company of 992.

You may wonder how we handled so great a number, five times the usual quota of peace-time passengers. Well, we could feed the lot in three-quarters of an hour. Emergencies call for emergency organization. I had fixed eighteen cafeterias in various parts of the ship which, in a way, were after the well-known quick-lunch counters of America. The men passed along in line with their plates and mugs and these were filled as each one passed the service window almost without a moment's pause. The men took their food up on deck, where it was consumed, and this had the advantage not only of expedition but also of cleanliness—no mess below.

I have often been asked how these Americans behaved—and the question sometimes has carried a sort of expectation that my reply would bring a shrug of tolerant criticism. When the time comes, I am going to have something to say about the Britisher's customary view of the American, but suffice it here to place on record that I could not have had a better lot of men on board. They were well-behaved, amenable to discipline and, withal, human; the finest lot of fellows you could wish to meet. They were cheery and full of enthusiasm. They wanted to "get at" the enemy, to finish the job off. They were heart and soul with the Allies, and incidentally, since in no way were they conscripted, they were

just the men who were eager for the adventure. I remember their excitement during that glimpse we had of an enemy submarine—their first actual peep at the real thing. And there was another occasion which brought a genuine thrill. That was off the south coast of Ireland. We had been picked up then by our destroyer escort and so any attack lost something of the potentialities of disaster that would have accompanied one alone in mid-ocean. All the same, every one I dare swear, gave a little breathless pause as a heavy jolt seemed to strike the ship. The tremor obviously came from under water. But it was not a tin fish ; it turned out to be the exploding of a depth charge dropped by one of the destroyers that had traced a layer of surface oil.

Apropos of submarine warfare, we had boat drill as soon as we left harbour, exercising “ Abandon ship.”

The first time it took anything from fifteen to twenty minutes for every one to get their appointed boat stations. That wouldn't do—if ever the manœuvre were to be actual instead of mere rehearsal. This was impressed on all and the second exercise reduced the time about thirty per cent. The third attempt caused a smile of satisfaction on the part of our passengers, the time being about seven minutes. But a lot can happen in seven minutes.

“ No,” I told them, “ it won't do ; it must be done in three and a half minutes.”

“ Impossible,” I was told, “ you can't get every man



up from below and at their stations in three and a half minutes.”

“I’m sure we can,” I asserted.

But, despite all persuasion, the fourth attempt recorded the same time—seven minutes. I determined to reduce it.

Now when boat drill was to be undertaken it was always announced, but on this occasion I waited until after dinner, then went to the bridge and ordered “Boat stations” to be sounded. Naturally every one thought it must be the real thing; there had been no previous announcement and not a soul knew beforehand there was to be a drill.

Every man was at his station in exactly three and a half minutes—and so the time was fixed for future occasions; there could be no saying the thing was impossible; it had been done.

I said just now that we were lucky. Certainly I had my share of it during the War. I could give many instances of the “sweet little cherub” watching over poor Jack. That year 1918 reminds me of a case.

One voyage we caught sight of the sun only once during the trip. Dull, hazy weather held all the way from New York to Liverpool. I picked up my escort of five American destroyers off the south coast of Ireland as usual. The weather grew worse and we saw nothing of the Irish coast. The Tusker Lighthouse was altogether hidden from us as we turned for St. George’s Channel, and a full gale was develop-

ing. Heavy rain accompanied us all up the Irish Sea, and when I had run my distance and wanted to turn round by Holyhead to make for the Mersey, in the pitch darkness we couldn't see the South Stack Light.

About half a mile on my weather side another steamer was heading the same way as myself, and I was faced with the decision whether to risk turning under her stern or forge ahead and cross her bows. We were too close to follow the former plan I thought, so I kept on and eventually got far enough ahead to cross her bows. We went on for Liverpool and picked up the Bar Lightship at the entrance of the Mersey *close on the port bow*. If that other vessel had not compelled me to go an extra couple of miles I should have been heading for trouble. We were going twenty-five knots and there was a strong tide carrying us along another three or four knots, in that rain the visibility was not more than a mile and I had not seen anything to check my position since leaving New York. The ordinary landsman may see little in it all, but the seaman will realize how that other vessel providentially steered me to safety—he was my “little cherub” that night all right.

I called it luck ; but is it ?

A sailor has his faith ; he lives so close to nature, there are times when he feels in touch with the infinite.

In this connexion I do not refer to superstition—such reported superstition as caused the *Mauretania* the

## HOME FROM THE SEA

other week to postpone a sailing until a minute or so after midnight because her proper day of departure happened to be Friday the thirteenth. Of old, sailors did hold those beliefs, far more so than now. If we sailed on a Friday, maybe over a ten months' voyage, nothing would happen at all untoward, no storm would threaten our safety, but what it was put down to that Friday sailing.

Faith is as different from superstition as courage is removed from fear. It is not fear but faith that makes the sailors down there at Marseilles hang replicas of their ships in the aisles of the church that looks from the hill-top on the bay with its immense gilded Madonna watching over them as they go and come. There are thoroughly authenticated stories of how that gleaming figure has guided lost fishers to port and how thought of Notre Dame de la Garde has strengthened them in adversity.

It was not fear that caused me to stand a moment silent beside my cabin desk in those dark days of war when we were setting out across dangerous waters. That moment of communion was both thanks and commitment of the future, and stimulated one for whatever lay ahead. I think that the closer to nature you live the more do you feel there is a Higher Command and that thought brings strength and comfort. If you have put yourself under orders, as it were, then carry on, do your best and leave the issue. It takes away worry without in any way lessening the highest effort of which you are capable ;

indeed it encourages that effort, for the Commander expects your best.

Oh, yes, there is a divinity that shapes our ends. . . .

One day, years ago, I had left Queenstown about noon and put to sea. It was winter-time and, after I had passed the Fastnet, both night and fog closed in on the ship. I was on the bridge staring out into nothingness for hours. An eerie quiet pervaded the shroud about us, broken only by the rhythm of the engines and the susurrous water far below against the ship's bow.

Suddenly I became conscious of trouble. There had been no sound, no sign; but my mind was impressed by the fact of imminent danger. You may call it a hunch or a sixth sense; whatever name you fit to the occasion, the fact remains that almost as involuntarily as though I played a part I gave the order: "Stop."

Silence followed the cessation of the engines. A minute passed. Then I heard the faint "Pip-pip!" of a vessel's foghorn. Out of the night it increased, grew loud, near, then gradually diminished until it faded away into silence again. The unseen ship had gone right across our bows and only the impulse that had made me stop—with never an outward and visible reason—had saved collision.

That same impulse saved me on another occasion that is very clear and real even to-day in my mind, though several years and much water lie between then and now. We were making the Straits of Belle

## HOME FROM THE SEA

Isle when dense fog enveloped us, so that it was dangerous to proceed even at "slow." All night we were hove to, and we knew there were other ships in the vicinity because on all hands we could hear their whistles. There was sun the next morning ; one knew that just above the mist about us it was brilliantly clear. Still there was no decent visibility though every indication of the weather clearing shortly.

We proceeded slowly, but soon that impulse came to me of impending trouble. It was not just the conditions that brought an extra wariness ; I had been in similar conditions a hundred and more times and had gone on. It was something far more definite than that. I was almost bidden to stop. Anyway I gave the order ; the engines ceased. But before the way had gone off the vessel, indeed, within a minute of my order, a look-out sang out :

"Ice close under the bow !"

We didn't touch it. But we stayed while the fog lifted, and as it thinned there grew into our view, rather like a photographic plate slowly developing in solution, what seemed to be a small island with waves gently breaking on its shore. It was an immense iceberg, a thousand feet long and a hundred and fifty feet high. Very beautiful to look upon in the breaking sunlight, but a most irritating companion during fog.

Fog and ice—the two bugbears of the North Atlantic ! Some people declare they can smell ice,

others rely on ice-glare—the slight lightening in the atmosphere at its close proximity. But, believe me, the only safe thing is when you can see it.

Sometimes, returning with a more or less empty ship on our way to collect more troops, we took a few passengers back to the States. Diplomatic and military personages found it necessary to go across to consult personally with our latest Allies. Some of them did not take kindly to the discipline that was a necessary part of their travel. Then, and even later, passengers were compelled to wear lifebelts, and I dare say some of the ladies didn't fancy it was a desirable part of their attire. Cumbersome and not exactly prepossessing. Among the passengers on one occasion were Lord and the first Lady Reading. A most courteous and charming couple, very retiring and unperturbed.

But Lady Reading, like many other ladies, had no love for lifebelts, and when she was promenading the decks a man could always be relied upon to be found in close attendance with a lifebelt.

By the way, we were not officially known as the *Mauretania* at that time! Not that I was informed of the fact. The knowledge came to me in a remarkable manner.

We were lying alongside the Liverpool landing-stage after one voyage, embarking our passengers for New York, when a naval warrant officer—a special messenger—brought me a service letter from the senior naval officer of the port. It was ad-

## HOME FROM THE SEA

dressed : " The Commanding Officer, H.M.S. *Tuber Rose*."

I looked at the envelope and said, " This isn't for me ; you've made a mistake."

" I think it's for you, sir," he answered, obviously a trifle shy of contradicting me.

" One of the other ships here, no doubt," I said, waving a hand at several that were near the stage.

" I am sure it's for you, sir," he urged.

I had a feeling that he knew he was right, but didn't like being too insistent in correcting me, so in the end I accepted it, gave a receipt, and opened it.

It was for me all right. The *Mauretania* was the *Tuber Rose*, and that was the first time I knew the secret camouflage name of my ship, or that one even existed. Why the secrecy towards me ? What was the use of my being kept in the dark ? It might have led to all manner of inconveniences and misunderstandings. A little more common sense and organization would have been appreciated.

So we draw near to the end of the world struggle. I don't know whether many readers know of that wild day in New York when the Armistice was first reported. I was there at the time. It was November 7th and just before noon news came round that the Armistice had been declared.

" I don't believe it," I said, and went to see the Marine Superintendent.

" Yes," he assured me. " It's all over. It's the

Armistice. We have instructions to blow whistles at twelve o'clock."

"But I've nothing from the Admiralty Office," I pointed out.

"It's true. It's all over the city. It's going to be a general holiday this afternoon."

Just then some friends rang up on the telephone and asked me to go with them to see the fun. I again expressed my doubts, but "Never mind," said they, "we'll call for you at half-past twelve."

So the whistles were blown, hundreds of them afloat and on shore, indeed Bedlam seemed let loose that day in New York. My friends duly arrived and I drove up town with them. Crews left their ships, clerks their offices, the streets were packed. Every one was shouting, dancing, singing.

One newspaper office had a great placard out announcing that the Armistice was not official, but did anyone care? If they did it did not damp their spirits. The fun went on just the same, all afternoon, all evening; parties, dancing, general excitement. It was on along towards morning when the New Yorkers in their own expressive way "called it a day."

Four days later the real Armistice came. I heard it by wireless; we were at sea. The ship had sailed on the Saturday with a full complement of troops. I at once informed the Commanding Officer; every one took it rather quietly. Whether their exuberance had been dissipated by what was known as "The



## HOME FROM THE SEA

False Armistice" or not I cannot say, but certainly they exhibited no wild delight at the news. Indeed, I fancy they were a little disappointed. They had missed "the show."

"Are you returning to New York with us or carrying on?" the officers wanted to know.

"My orders were to proceed to Liverpool with all dispatch," I answered, "and those orders will be carried out."

They cheered up at that; sighed with relief.

It was easy to read their thoughts; they would at any rate "get overseas." That was something!

## CHAPTER X

### THE SOCIAL WHIRL

MEN thaw on board. They throw aside the cloaks they wear on shore. One can see them change. After a couple of days the open air and the holiday mood have caught them, by the third they have often humanized and become different. They are off stage.

We get a notoriety such as, for example, Mr. Gilbert Frankau. He is Gilbert Frankau the eminent writer when he comes on board. Indeed, when once he crossed on the *Mauretania*, he retained that somewhat provocative manner that those who know him ashore realize is one of his qualities. He sat at my table and he said things—witty things, but regardless of others' susceptibilities. He's like that and in a way it is to his credit; he doesn't suit his views to his audience. Independent, and, I gather, rather glories in it. He said just what he thought about America, for instance, never minding that there were Americans at the same table. They bristled a bit—but he went on.

In a day or two it seemed he forgot to say provocative things; he relaxed mentally as well as physically. He grew, shall I say, softer? Opinions of him changed; I know, there were friends of mine

## HOME FROM THE SEA

at the table. When he landed every one agreed that he was a jolly good companion, liked him and hoped they would have the privilege of crossing with him again.

Thus we see a more intimate side of the great ones. Let me, so to speak, introduce you to Sir Joseph Duveen—and his charming wife and daughter. On land he is one of the cutest business men you will find in a year's search ; I have heard him recount with a chuckle stories of his own acumen. But here he is talking of everything but art, happy, care-free, full of banter and quips. After dinner he comes to my cabin with several other men who have shared my table. We all sit and talk. The hours pass. It is long after midnight when they leave and go back to their wives. We are old friends ; every year Sir Joseph makes the crossing.

Next night they come again and we talk once more. Nothing special that one could recount, just, as the walrus said, of cabbages and kings. But it is all so interesting that the time slips by and the hour is one when at last they leave me to turn in.

There may be a few intimate yarns. Sir Joseph tells us how he started in life. His father, it seems, gave him a thousand pounds and sent him to New York to open an Art shop. He smiles as we jolly him, wondering how far he has managed to stretch that thousand by now.

Another member of the company is a big cotton man who was born within a mile of me. He recalls

how he used to go to the mills in those far days about the time I was in the *Conway*. Now he has built mills of his own out in New England.

The talk goes on ; it is two o'clock when we shake hands and say " good night."

And the next morning there is trouble. The wives remonstrate and ask what we do sitting up so late in the privacy of the Captain's cabin.

" Nothing at all, just gossiping," Sir Joseph answers, but there is an arch in Lady Duveen's brows and her merry eyes laugh her doubts. Now it is a fact that our after-dinner libations are nothing more than coffee, for if every one drank as little as I do there would be an appalling fall in a certain class of revenue to the State. But the ladies don't credit the fact that interesting conversation keeps us awake until the small hours.

That third night we forgather once more, and it is about eleven o'clock when there is a knock on the cabin door. I open it and there is Lady Duveen laughingly asking what we are doing. She's come to investigate.

" Come in," I invite her, and she joins the company.

And when she leaves, with the remainder, it is nearly three o'clock !

The other wives next day express their wish to join our evening gathering and they do, and that night we break our record : it is half-past three when we separate. That's the worst of these ladies ; they keep one up so late !

It was possibly their presence that made someone

## HOME FROM THE SEA

suggest we should tell the story of how we met our wives, and we were exchanging confidences for hours. One lady present had met her husband appropriately enough on a Cunard ship cruising in the Mediterranean ; that started the ball rolling.

Every man I suppose has a love story somewhere in his life ; mine, I told them, commenced many years back just before I was going to China for my naval training. I had gone to an orchestral concert in Bolton, and there met a man I hadn't seen for fourteen years. He invited me over to his home the following Friday, and I went. The time passed so pleasantly that it was half-past nine when I suddenly inquired :

“ What's the last train to Bolton ? ”

“ It's gone,” they laughed, and made me stay the night. I was nothing loath. It was a jolly family and I was secretly delighted, especially with one member of it—a bonny bouncing girl who was the daughter of the house.

The father had a gift of story-telling and he could reel off yarns in Lancashire dialect, so we had a late sitting.

As I was leaving the next morning I mentioned to the daughter that I was off on Monday to China.

“ Don't come back with a pigtail,” she laughed, “ or we won't know you.”

At Ceylon I wrote to my friend, her brother, and later received a reply the first part of which was in his handwriting, the latter part in that of the sister's.

## THE SOCIAL WHIRL

He had been interrupted and asked her to finish the epistle. In view of that, my answer was addressed to her. And that was the beginning of my love story. The writer of the second portion of that letter was the present Lady Rostron.

It had been no easy matter when the War ended to relax and take up the long-neglected social side of a captain's life. We were busy in those days. So many of the liners that had been in the Atlantic service had gone to their last rest, that those which remained to carry on were pretty full. Ambassadors, big business men, bankers, politicians were especially in evidence, and several of the outstanding war figures also. Admiral Sims and his staff crossed with me returning home. His chief of staff told me one day at lunch that I had been the cause of more damage to the U.S.A. destroyers than any one man. He referred, of course, to the escorts of the *Mauretania* during 1918, as we usually had five destroyers with us each way between the west of Ireland and Liverpool. Those destroyers had to go all out to keep up with the *Mauretania*, seeing they had to zigzag as well. Once or twice indeed I dropped them astern, their bows buried in heavy seas, and went ahead; it seemed wiser to push on alone than to loiter and wait for their company.

Shortly after the Armistice we had General Pau, the famous one-armed French soldier, who had been out to Australia on a mission, returning with us in the *Mauretania* to Cherbourg.

## HOME FROM THE SEA

During the voyage I took the General and his mission round the ship and incidentally inspected the kitchens. The chef and several of his assistants were Frenchmen and had done their bit in the war. The chef was anxious to pay his respects to the General and I therefore arranged for them to meet. The General was intensely interested. The chef informed me he would like to give a dinner to General Pau. I there and then made arrangements for the General and his mission to dine with me in my own cabin that evening.

The chef did justice to himself and credit to the ship, and everything went merry and bright.

During dinner, the secretary to the mission was telling us numerous incidents of their voyage. He spoke very fluently in English, but had now and then to turn to his superior with a sentence in French so that the soldier could understand what was being said, for General Pau was unacquainted with our language. Names, however, are universal and the secretary in his conversation mentioned that of Honolulu. Immediately the General's eyes lighted. Here was a word he recognized and evidently it brought to him visions of lovely maidens bedecking him with the usual floral offerings.

"Ha—Honolulu," he said with a touch of the ecstatic. Then he smacked his lips, blew an imaginary kiss into the air and raising his glass made us drink to "Honolulu."

Admiral Mayo, who commanded the U.S. Fleet,

was also a passenger. On that occasion we had a pretty bad dusting off the Banks with a stiff north-east gale blowing. I thought it would interest the Admiral to come on the bridge and see how the *Mauretania* kept up her twenty-five knots in such a heavy sea. He was certainly impressed—but I imagine the rest of the party considered it more comfortable a few decks below the bridge!

Almost every passenger enjoys looking over a big vessel—I suppose it goes back to the childish days when one's father lifted one up as a kiddie and took his infant to "see the engines." I remember Mr. Winston Churchill was specially interested. He went all over the *Mauretania*. He was First Lord of the Admiralty then but, if I may whisper it politely, it occurred to me that to carry out the duties of that high office did not require much technical knowledge of ships!

Prince George, charming, shy yet gracious and friendly, was different. He knew ships and when he was on board he examined everything with the eye of an expert and the interest of an enthusiast. He had the Royal suite opposite to the Prince of Wales's and was, of course, the centre of interest on board. Naturally enough, many feminine hearts fluttered at his close proximity, but I fear they fluttered in vain. He was a very retiring passenger, keeping a good deal to his own quarters, though he came out to dance sometimes and was delightful to every one.

We are a complete city in miniature when at sea.



## HOME FROM THE SEA

Some "residents," such as the Queen of Rumania and Mr. Edgar Wallace, will be busy in their cabins with their literary work; others, gay and out to enjoy themselves, like Miss Gertrude Lawrence, will "throw a party" most nights and after dinner keep up the fun in their cabins until the small hours. Many exist very much as if they were around their own firesides. In the smoke-rooms there will be cards, with a little gambling to enliven the play. Romances will begin—and often end—and officers will patrol the decks, even as policemen on shore pace their beats. You get different styles of living just as in any town, the luxurious surroundings of the first-class graduating down through the second, the tourists' (jolliest crowd on the whole ship), to the third. And it is rather wonderful that with such a large company representing so many different types we get such little trouble. When any does arise it is usually provided either by passengers who "relax" too much during the space at sea and look more than is wise on the wine when it bubbles, or by the only passengers who never change—the gamblers.

Of course, there is no restriction on playing; there is nothing to stop men sitting up all night at cards; indeed, they do nowadays sometimes until dawn. We wish to give our passengers whatever they want, and the old rule of closing the bar and having a general "lights out" at midnight has gone. As long as passengers are about there are always attendants to supply their needs. Thus more and more, ship life in-

clines to start later in the morning and carry on later at night. There are few passengers who are down to the nine o'clock breakfast; many ladies don't appear until the early afternoon, from which time there is always something to occupy their interest. But speaking of trouble—and gambling. . . .

During 1926, going to America I had three Americans in my cabin after dinner and we were talking of travel and of companions one met both on land and sea. One of them told of an experience he had in regard to meeting people casually and how the innocent can be taken in.

"I am a good card player," he said, not boastfully but just as a matter of information. "Once I was going from New York to California and didn't know a soul on the train. On the second day a man came to me and asked me to make a fourth at bridge.

" 'Right,' I told him, 'I'll play.'

"The first evening I lost a little at first but finished more or less square. And so it went on; we played a good deal most days. We were playing old-fashioned bridge, not auction. Well, it passed the time and the other fellows were good company, but if you have played as much as I have in all sorts of circumstances you keep your eyes skinned. On the last night I didn't like the fact that one of the men left the table for a few minutes. There might have been nothing in it—but there was! When he came back the cards were dealt. Hearts were trumps and I had been given a pretty promising hand. I held the ace, king,

## HOME FROM THE SEA

queen, jack, nine and another of the suit—six in all. There was a good deal of doubling—too much I decided, and I guessed what had happened. All the other hearts were in one hand, and if I hadn't been a bit of an expert I'd have lost pretty heavily."

"Very interesting," I said. "I wonder whether you would write down the hands for me?"

He did so, and I put the record in my desk.

Coming back we were due in Plymouth on Monday evening or Tuesday morning. Early on the Monday morning the purser came to me and said a passenger had complained of cheating at cards as a result of which he had lost 13,000 dollars. Would I take it up?

"Certainly," I replied.

The "pigeon" came along and told me how he had been asked by three strangers to make a fourth at bridge. He had played most nights with his new friends and the game fluctuated quietly so that until the final night he was about all square. Back of my mind it sounded very like the story my friend had told me on the previous voyage across. Could it be that the gamblers of the train were on board the ship? I cocked my ears when he went on to explain that they had been playing old-fashioned bridge, and as soon as he commenced to describe the hand over which he complained of cheating and said: "Hearts were trumps and——" I cut in.

"And you held the ace, king, queen, jack, nine and another?"

## THE SOCIAL WHIRL

He looked at me in perplexity. "That's right," he admitted.

"I'll see all the gentlemen concerned at 2.30," I said.

Three came. A Captain X didn't turn up.

"Fetch him," I ordered, and the staff captain and the purser went in search. When he arrived I told them I knew all about their plot. They tried to ridicule me.

"Would you like proof?" I asked them, and got the paper my friend had given me from my desk. "It was a placed pack," I asserted. They saw I had them.

But they would not give back the money. I had made up my mind to bluff them a bit, and now told them that I should have them arrested on landing at Plymouth. Unfortunately five minutes before they came to my room I had received a wireless telling me not to call at Plymouth as the General Strike was on and the passengers might not get to London. I was to go to Cherbourg and then Southampton, where it was thought transit would be safer. But these men didn't know that and thinking the police would be waiting for them at Plymouth they agreed to refund—half.

"That won't do," I told them, and then began a sort of Dutch auction. The amount they were to retain came lower and lower. When it reached two thousand dollars I cut in.

"Right, I'll accept that."

## HOME FROM THE SEA

So the duped passenger got most of his money back.

Curiously enough I ran across exactly the same procedure twice in the *Berengaria* only a little later. The men were different each time and the amounts were first ten thousand dollars and then twenty-one thousand dollars. On each of these occasions I accepted the players' offer to return the money all save two thousand dollars.

One more gambling episode. It concerned a very innocent Englishman and I forget the amount, but there was no doubt he had been "rooked." He didn't rightly know the game. When he was brought to me I told him to try and get back the cheque he had given them. "If they won't part," I said, "I'll see them." His first interview was fruitless. I primed him for a second. He went down and, carrying out instructions, approached them in friendly mood. After a time he asked to see the cheque because he had made some mistake in it. When they showed it him, he snatched and tore it into bits. They couldn't do anything—except growl.

In two and a half years I got back altogether fifty-three thousand dollars for passengers who had been swindled at cards.

Passengers don't often lose their heads, but if they do it is up to the Captain to maintain order for the sake of the other people on board. There was a bit of a scuffle one night, or rather morning, after a gambling party had broken up. I think it was a

## THE SOCIAL WHIRL

water-jug that was thrown and one man received cuts on the face. The affair was brought to me and I had them up.

“Do you want to prosecute?” I asked the man who was hurt.

He said he didn't. So I turned to the man who had assaulted him. “You mustn't enter any public room for the remainder of the voyage. Give me your word of honour and you'll hear no more.”

He gave it me and kept it, and I know he bore no malice because he crossed with me a bit later. I saw him and said affably: “No more of it, you know.”

He laughed and shook his head. “No, Captain,” and all was well.

When men do get a bit wild it is always after a late night. Once three youngsters in the early morning went on deck and commenced throwing lifebelts overboard. They were seized and brought before me. One of them ventured a superior sort of smile and asked: “Well, what can you do about it?”

“Take that smile off your face,” I told him. “I am not only master of the ship but chief magistrate.” After a little argument I said: “I'll leave it to you. It is a criminal offence to destroy life-saving appliances. I shall charge you the value and shall also fine you. You will hand to the purser a certain amount which will go to the seamen's charities. Otherwise I shall hand you over to the authorities

## HOME FROM THE SEA

on arrival at New York and you will find you have committed a serious offence." For, of course, though while at sea a captain is all-powerful even to the extent of placing a man in a strait-jacket—and it has been done—yet he has to answer for his actions on reaching shore. In this case they paid up meekly. One can usually settle little troubles on the spot. For instance, a steward had to complain to me at Cherbourg that a passenger had struck him and broken his dental plate. Once again it was after an all-night party. I charged the offender five pounds for repairs and that was the end of it.

That is the awkward side of life aboard. It obtrudes very slightly, I'm glad to say. Mostly travellers are in good mood. And the more distinguished the person as a rule the more sociable and reserved. Most of them join in with all the activities of the ship. Sir Harry Lauder will gladly occupy half the programme at our concert, for instance, and Miss Evelyn Laye or Chaliapin will sing. Whatever a person can do, he or she does as a rule. If it was Lord Birkenhead he would readily oblige with an address to the passengers, who, you may be sure, were eager to gather in the lounge and listen.

What an amazingly eloquent man he was, by the way. I recollect one afternoon he had promised to address a gathering. Was he busy preparing his speech? Not a bit. Indeed, he almost forgot all about it. There we were—I in the chair to introduce

him—and he had not put in an appearance. After waiting a time I sent out a search-party. Lord Birkenhead was peacefully dozing in the smoke-room. Yet in three minutes he was delighting us with his wit and pungent criticisms.

He was always quite a personage on board, commanding, attracting all eyes. So was Mr. Ramsay MacDonald—a little more human, perhaps not so far in the heights, probably because his daughter was with him and there was so obviously a devotion that was delightful to see between them. He came over with us when he went out to engage in the naval reduction conference and the trip occasioned much excitement. He told me he was delighted with his reception; especially when he saw two cruisers that came out two hundred miles to sea to greet him. Miss Ishbel was just a simple Scots girl, unaffected, a pleasant and very knowledgeable conversationalist, quiet, observant, interested in everything and interesting to every one.

The Prime Minister was no lie-abed. Every morning one could see him at six o'clock pacing the deck taking an early constitutional before breakfast. I guess they've got to keep fit, these hard workers. A man like Edgar Wallace always takes his early morning exercise; Lord Birkenhead usually had a swim before breakfast.

These leaders of the world unbent and became part of the company travelling. They all knew the art of mixing. Many of them would preside over the



## HOME FROM THE SEA

concerts and helped tremendously with the jollity of such evenings.

A certain Scottish lord presided one night and kept the audience in roars of laughter with some stories he told ; I'm not sure he wasn't the best " turn " of the night. I remember one story.

He said his people came from the north, yet they didn't seem to be able to hold on to money. " It is said of us," he explained, possibly with his tongue in his cheek, " that if it were raining gold and one of us had an umbrella he would keep it shut up under his arm when any decent Scotsman would open it—and hold it out inverted ! ”

That made my friend Jesse Straus laugh. He is one of the heads of Macy, the giant stores of America where you can buy anything from a needle to a railway engine. His family is wealthy, yet wealth made no difference one night to his father and mother. They were on board the *Titanic* when it struck. Mrs. Straus had a chance to get into one of the boats.

" No," she said, " I shall not go without you," turning to her husband. And they went down together.

Another outstanding personality among passengers was Mr. Lloyd George. Despite his by no means commanding stature he seemed to dominate any assembly in which he chanced to be. Always affable and smiling, ready to mix with every one and to talk at table freely about the world, the flesh and the Liberal Party. I fancy he was not quite so much

## THE SOCIAL WHIRL

in his element as part of the social round as he was when, in port, the reporters swarmed aboard, all eager to get an interview with the illustrious visitor to their country.

He collected them together in the lounge and I have an imperishable picture of him, sitting back in his chair, his legs crossed, as he gazed with his merry eyes on the circle of newspaper men who were grouped around waiting for his words of wisdom. They looked for all the world like a Sunday-school class being addressed by their teacher !

CHAPTER XI  
MORE ATLANTIC NIGHTS

COMMUNAL life on board commences after lunch and reaches its height after dinner. Mornings are rather dead, few passengers are about except those energetic members of the community who seek a set-off from the somewhat lazy life afloat by exercise in the gymnasium, the swimming-pool or the sports' practice nets.

As soon as lunch is over many play horse or dog racing on deck in connexion with which there is a pari mutuel and most have "a little bit on" to add zest to the sport. Or there may be boxing matches—which are better to watch in my mind than professional encounters—and always there is the cinema. Most of the big ships are now fitted with a "talkie" screen and shows are well attended.

Then it is tea-time and the cocktail hour and a space to dress for dinner.

What a difference to-day from twenty years ago! Then people used to come on board and the first thing they did was to unpack their "steamer clothes." These were not specially attractive to look upon; they dressed in those days for a rough time. Immediately on arrival the other side these queer clothes were

## MORE ATLANTIC NIGHTS

packed away in steamer trunks and stored to await their return. Now the dining-room of a ship like the *Berengaria* equals in smartness the finest hotels in London, Paris or Cairo. Jewels blaze on perfectly moulded necks ; the hair has been dressed during the afternoon by the ship's lady hairdressers, the latest creations from Paris cause admiring—and sometimes envious—looks. There is no better dressed crowd in the world. Later, it may be interesting to draw a few comparisons between sea-going life now and a generation ago, but for the present, since we are gossiping of social things and prominent people, it is sufficient to realize that here in the dining-room is gathered the élite of many countries, perfectly turned out, and in the mood to dance soon, as they do on shore, until the small hours of the morning, even though outside the Atlantic may be shaking its tawny manes and a hurricane developing from the south-west. The riotings of the elements do not worry them much—down here. There are few nights when the ship is not sufficiently steady to dance to the well-equipped and competent orchestra.

Then there is the fun of the "Pool." Very few people who have not made the crossing on one of the larger liners know just how this is handled. It is a sweep on the day's run of the ship—twenty-four hours. Now the *Mauretania* steams twenty-five and a half knots an hour and the *Berengaria* a bit less. Take the former. Her average run per day is round the 600-odd miles' mark. Passengers know this and have the opportunity

## HOME FROM THE SEA

to judge whether average speed is being maintained or if, through bad weather or fog, there is likely to be a diminution. But for the most part somewhere about the actual figure can be guessed. Suppose we take 600. Several passengers purchase numbers just above and below this figure—the actual figure, too, of course. These numbers are then auctioned. Sometimes twenty pounds is offered for a number, often much more. The passenger who has the original ticket can, of course, buy it in at the auction, but if he sells it, he retains half the proceeds should it win.

The total of money to be divided varies enormously but is usually well in the hundreds. It depends on the wealth among passengers and not a little on the quality of the auctioneer. Sometimes there is great fun. A few of the amateur auctioneers we have had would put the patten of many a professional to shame. And it is amazing how now and then one passenger will have a run of luck in this pool, just as a player will at the tables at Monte Carlo.

On one passage out to America there sat at my table an Englishwoman. I didn't even know she was going in for the sweep, though, to be sure, the ladies are just as keen on this little flutter as the men. However, she went up and obtained a ticket. She got a number that night for fifteen pounds. That number won. The next night she bid for and obtained another number and again it was successful. Rare enough to win twice, but lo ! on the third night her number again took the pool. The thing was looking a bit uncanny,

but on the fourth night surprise gave way in a few minds to suspicion when this lady's number again was the correct one.

"I object," cried out one man who evidently took the business a bit seriously. "This lady is sitting at the captain's table."

Not only an objectionable but a stupid remark. In the Atlantic where we get such quick changes of weather it is impossible to forecast the run and the captain and officers do not know any better than those who are gambling on it. Other travellers, of course, realize that and on this occasion the objector was instantly squashed.

But several American gentlemen on board were so impressed by the lady's run of luck that on the fifth night they asked if they might go fifty-fifty with her. Smilingly she agreed, for, as you shall hear, she was anything but a mercenary person.

Again she won!

I dare say she cleared a thousand pounds on the trip, but she didn't leave the ship with a hundred dollars. Of course, it is an unwritten law that the winner shall be temporary host or hostess to the jolly crowd who indulge in the pastime, but in addition to this she gave away all her winnings—very generous tips and donations to the sailors' charities.

The same lady crossed back, I was told, on the *Aquitania* and she lost every night.

That notion that I knew the mileage was not uncommon. Three Americans once occupied seats at

## HOME FROM THE SEA

my table and one lunch-time I noticed one hand over some money to the others. It was winnings at the sweep.

“Do you mind?” one asked when they explained.

“Not a bit,” I laughed. “Good luck.”

Next lunch-time one of them came to the table looking rather sheepish.

“Well, out with it. What is the result to-day?”

“We’ve won again,” he told me, and was quite apologetic lest other passengers should think he had obtained inside knowledge—you know, straight from the horse’s mouth as it were.

Speaking of the gift made by the lady winner to the sailors’ charities; I should like to say here how generous passengers always are to that excellent cause. The spirit of goodwill is, indeed, aboard in this regard. At times it is staggering—and is most appreciated.

I remember once a colonel gave a thousand dollars to the charities. This inspired someone to offer £50 on condition ten others gave £10. It was all forthcoming. “I’ll give ten if ten will give one each,” went on another. That was obtained. Then a lady said she had a twenty-dollar gold piece of a certain date and she would sell it. It fetched a hundred dollars and was at that turned in again for re-sale. This time it obtained seventy dollars and was once more re-auctioned—for fifty.

Then well-known persons will make offerings according to their specialities. Helen Wills will autograph a racket she has won a championship with.



CAPTAIN ROSTRON, WITH MR. AND MRS. OGDEN, WHO TOOK THE  
PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE *Titanic's* BOATS





One I recollect brought a hundred and fifty dollars. Hagen, when crossing to win the British golf championship, landed without a very specially favourite club—a mashie iron. On the way over he had offered to auction it for the charities and was himself naturally chosen as the auctioneer. It fetched the large sum of £200. “I was glad to get that amount,” he said afterwards, “but I was darned sorry to lose an old friend.”

Speaking of Hagen, he came aboard the *Mauretania* with no fewer than 600 golf balls. “When I knew I was crossing,” he said, “I began to collect them. Friends gave me their old ones together with their good wishes for success in the British championship. I love the long drive and what better practice could you want than hitting away with all your might into the broad Atlantic.” The passengers were as delighted as he to see ball after ball splash into the sea and some of the sporty ones regretted they could not bet on the distances. “Well,” he remarked, “I’ve lost a few balls in my time but never as many as on this trip across the pond.”

The big ships offer plenty of opportunity for sportsmen—and sportswomen—on board; they need never grow stale, for there are gyms, and swimming-pools, and tennis nets always available. Miss Betty Nuthall as well as other of our lady players used to play at the nets frequently.

But the *Berengaria* gave a different type of lesson to one of our leading sporting women. I refer to

## HOME FROM THE SEA

Miss Betty Carstairs. She looks like a sailor and I christened her "The Skipper." She knows all about motor-boats, to be sure, but she is also a very knowledgeable yachswoman ; she told me about her new boat that was launched and in which she said she intended to make long ocean voyages.

When she was crossing with me, however, she was all set on a new motor-boat she was then having built. This was a seventy-foot vessel and with it she planned to make a record crossing of the Atlantic.

I stared at her. One knew she had no lack of pluck, but to cross the Atlantic with its moods and its immensity in such a boat seemed mad. You know you can read of adventures like that and pass them by almost ; they don't get home to you. But when a girl is talking to you in close proximity, a girl who has sat beside you at dinner, a girl in evening dress and who looks up at you with such straight eyes, the thing seems altogether different. I looked at Miss Carstairs and was amazed, first at the pluck of this quiet girl, then at her blissful daring to tackle something she surely could not understand.

"Come up to the bridge to-morrow when it is light," I told her.

She came, delighted enough, for everything that concerns the sea and ships holds her entire interest.

"Now this is about the finest month of the year," I reminded her. "Right ; now look at that swell."

The Atlantic was quiet enough—for the Atlantic.

## MORE ATLANTIC NIGHTS

But the great swells rolled by. I tried to picture to her what her seventy-foot boat would have to face during every hour of the nights and days even if it was fine weather ; of course if she encountered a real buster—well, that was a risk she understood. But she stood looking there and listening to me for a quarter of an hour—seeing her frail craft opposing those heaving hills with the speed she planned to attain in order to make a record crossing. Her boat hadn't even a flare at the bows.

“ No,” she said. “ I see the scheme is impossible. I can't do it. Thank you.”

She never made that attempt ; I fancy she was so put off it that she never as much as got into that boat, though it was built.

By the way, what a veritable outbreak in sport there has been among women since the War. They always seem to be crossing the Atlantic, golf girls, rowing girls, swimming girls, tennis girls, even flying girls. All very charming, usually romping, healthy creatures, full of life. But I often think the thing is vastly overdone. Is it good for the race that these girls—many of them still in their teens—should be asking such tremendous effort of their physiques ? I doubt it ; I am old-fashioned enough to prefer the girlish girl, not the falsely demure miss of the Victorian era, but the sane daughter of this century who looks upon sport as pleasant exercise and recreation and not the be-all and end-all of her existence. These are perhaps the future mothers of boys, and those boys

will be the better if their mothers have not lived the hectic, overstraining life these sportswomen do to-day.

I would like to go further and suggest that among men, too, altogether too much prominence and importance are given to sport. A professional boxer or a professional golfer is thought much more of than men who are doing the world's work. And many of them can't stand the glare of the limelight—let's leave it at that. But walking about the saloons of a liner year after year one cannot help drawing comparisons, and it is the really important man who attracts least attention. You will find, shall we say, a man like the late Lord Melchett almost unobserved, hiding from recognition.

This criticism does not include such men as Sir Malcolm Campbell or the late Sir Henry Segrave and good fellows like Brown and Alcock. We might rank them among sportsmen, but how much more they are! They raise British prestige—and that is a national service. And for the most part such men are not out for mere notoriety. Take Brown and Alcock. They crossed with me before their pioneer flight. Think of it—the first to cross the Atlantic by air—and all done so quietly that even years afterwards when, with a bigger blast of trumpets, others made the crossing, that first—ininitely the most courageous—flight by Brown and Alcock was almost forgotten—just as when the German airship landed in New York there were thousands who thought it

## MORE ATLANTIC NIGHTS

was the first flight of its kind, whereas one of our own naval dirigibles had accomplished the feat long before.

Later Sir Whitten Brown crossed with me again in the *Mauretania*.

I asked him about the flight.

“ I wouldn't do it again for anything on earth,” he said.

How many of the famous have trodden the decks on my ships ! In memory I get little pictures of them. Men like Lord Grey who, with his staff, crossed when he was taking up the position of Ambassador at Washington. He kept very much to himself, and I see him with his heavily shaded eyes, for he had grave trouble with them then, almost a shy, certainly a very retiring figure, hardly mixing with the rest of the passengers.

It seemed always to me that the greater a man was the less prominence he sought. Take General Smuts. He sat at my table, but he never sought the limelight. Quiet, reserved, almost diffident he was, yet you had but to talk to him in private to realize what a fire burned in him for all that was calculated to help a struggling humanity. His rich voice would warm when he spoke of the ideals of peace, and from the modest man who strolled quietly about the decks avoiding observation, he became a man you knew was a commander, firm of principle, tenacious of purpose. Whenever he left me after anything approaching an intimate talk he left behind a tonic

## HOME FROM THE SEA

atmosphere. There are few fighters who can also dream, and fewer dreamers who can take off the gloves to reach their ideals. One felt Smuts would reach to the stars to drag down his.

They bob in and out, these figures, seen and gone as on a moving screen. And not always the famous stay in mind the firmest. I got much enjoyment out of passengers who walked the more ordinary paths of life.

One was a man who hailed from Sydney. He was a newspaper proprietor in rather a big way I gathered. After dinner one night I asked him up to my cabin for a yarn and he spoke most interestedly of Australia in rather an academic way. He came again next night, and somehow the conversation drifted to the sailor's life and I was drawing some passing comparison between life on a big liner and the sort of experiences one had in windjammers long ago. His eyes fired with keenness and human understanding.

"What?" he cried out, surprised. "Do you mean to say *you*" (with an emphasis on the "you") "have been through the mill?"

"Certainly," I smiled. "Away back in the 'eighties I was on a full-rigged ship called *Cedric the Saxon*, and——"

He interrupted, his hand held out with enthusiasm. "Put it there, Captain," he said.

The explanation was that he thought, seeing I had a title (it was after I had received my knighthood) and commanded a big liner, I was what is called a "cuff

and collar sailor " and he was delighted to find I had been through the whole gamut of a sailor's life. Fellow-sympathy, you see. For he, too, had risen from being a boy in the East End of London to his present position as a large newspaper owner, and was proud of it. Alas, so many who have risen in the world seek to hide their humble beginnings. This man didn't. I read in the papers a bit later how he had gone back to the haunts of his youth and renewed acquaintance with old friends.

Another and rather quaint figure looms into view. I might almost call him our oldest inhabitant! He commenced crossing in Cunard ships as far back as the 'sixties and has been a regular traveller ever since. Surely that must constitute a record.

Mr. Francis Hyde his name, and during the years he became a close friend of mine. He still travels and, though he commenced his journeys before I was born, passengers may still see his lean figure a little bent wandering about the decks and become impressed by that old-fashioned courtesy which characterizes him. He is American but has an inordinate love of England, so much so that he is an authority on English cathedrals, having visited all of them in the land, and is able to give you from memory the detailed history of any one. Another of his hobbies is dialects extending not only over every part of Britain but also the nearer countries of the Continent.

He has an intimate knowledge of old London, and can recall many features of the place, its life and



## HOME FROM THE SEA

people, that have long since passed into oblivion. His stories always interested and amused me.

Since he was about 75 he has travelled alone. His habits are almost clock-like. He leaves New York every year practically on the same date, always reserves the same cabin, engages the same rooms at Claridge's. These reservations are made for his next trip immediately on his return from the last. He makes two voyages every year. Spending a month over in England, he goes back to New York for little more than a visit to his doctor and dentist and to get his mail, crosses again for a further month or so, and then returns.

A remarkable man, he must be eighty-seven or more now, with a memory unimpaired. He is full of pleasant tales of other days. He will tell how as a young man he shouldered a musket in the American Civil War of the 'sixties, and he can tell an Englishman as much about the history of that man's country as a professor. He kept a log of every voyage—there were books of them which he has shown me—quite a history of travel conditions all the way from sailing days right up to this year's latest improvements. May his shadow never grow less—and may it fall on the decks of the 70,000-tonner when in due time she is launched!

Here is a dignified and beautiful figure—a queen, Marie of Rumania. The lady passengers that trip were all agog with excitement, having a real queen on board. They did not see much of her, however. She

## MORE ATLANTIC NIGHTS

kept a good deal to her own suite, occupied with her literary work. And she was returning from a tour of the States that had not brought her much happiness. As a matter of fact, her visit was rather bungled by the people who organized it. She appeared to me to be thoroughly tired out when she came on board, but the trip over did her good and she looked much better on arrival at Cherbourg, where, by the way—as though her journeyings could not be smooth at any point—it was blowing hard and I had to dodge about for some time awaiting a lull before I could enter the harbour.

But while their distinguished mother kept very much in the background, the young Prince and Princess, her two children who accompanied her, joined in the social amenities on board and made themselves very popular.

Another world figure ; she comes to vision from a far more distant past—Madame Melba. That was when I was a senior officer in the *Saxonia* and she crossed from Boston to Liverpool. I remember her chiefly because of an incident which shows her graciousness. My small experience of her makes it easy for me to believe the tales that were told of her when she died—how she would give generously of her help to struggling artists ; how she would give her luxurious car away to a fellow-singer just because he hadn't one.

On the *Saxonia* Melba had a suite on the promenade deck and it was her custom to sing to the four walls

## HOME FROM THE SEA

of her cabin every afternoon. Naturally this was soon passed round and early one evening one or two other officers and myself tiptoed to her cabin portholes and, crouching there, listened to that gloriously golden voice. One of us must have made a noise and so revealed our presence, for her accompanist suddenly looked up and saw us. Melba was by no means annoyed, as she might have been. Instead, coming to the porthole :

“Come in,” she invited.

We went in and she favoured us to a private concert which I shall never forget.

I also had another experience of her courtesy and understanding years later. She came aboard my ship in Boston during a very cold snap. Everything was frozen up. I must explain that in cold weather we always turn off all the water, opening up every hydrant so that there is no water left to freeze. Before leaving the dock an officer would see that every hydrant was closed again before the water-service was turned on.

Unfortunately on this occasion Melba's trunks were stowed in the vicinity of one of these hydrants in the luggage hold. After leaving Boston it was discovered something was wrong, the pressure of water used for cleaning down on deck was not as it should have been, and so an examination was made. We soon found where the extra pressure had been diverted from its proper use. It was wasting its energy through that very hydrant beside Melba's luggage ! For an hour

## MORE ATLANTIC NIGHTS

the water had been spouting into the famous singer's gear. Her trunks and clothes were soaked, a large quantity ruined beyond hope of repair.

Few ladies would have regarded the ruin that Melba looked upon and been so perfectly sweet about it. She just smiled and said : " Never mind, it couldn't be helped." Of course the Company compensated her for the damage but, apart from that, I know a good many passengers who would have wanted someone's blood for the disaster.

Speaking of compensation, it might be interesting to record that the only thing concerning the ship the captain of a liner knows nothing about is insurance. It is an understood rule between Insurance and Shipping Companies that he shall not know what eventualities are " covered." That obviously is so that his reports and allocation of any blame there may be cannot be coloured or biased in favour of his owners.

A rather tragic figure—a noted ambassador travelling to Europe under the shadow of the knowledge that his son was desperately ill. He was on my right at table. On my left was an old friend—Mr. Arthur Fowler, who cannot resist telling a story. He tells one superlatively well. He is infectious with his quiet droll humour. I have had him at my table a good many times and he tells yarns all the way over every time and never repeats himself. Helen Marr had nothing on him.

But you want the right atmosphere for a good story

—care-free fellows who, at least for the moment, have put their troubles behind them and are out to enjoy a mealtime. What would happen with this inveterate raconteur and the famous statesman who, naturally enough, was in no mood for pleasantries?

“Do you think I might try one?” Fowler whispered to me the first day out, for he knew of the ambassador’s worry.

“A very mild one,” I hinted.

He edged a bit of a yarn into the conversation. We smiled tamely. The ambassador took no notice.

Fowler told another at the next meal, a trifle more hilarious. Our smiles ventured to broaden. The ambassador took no notice.

But Fowler couldn’t be happy eating morosely. He chattered and illustrated his gossip with further stories. On the third day he recounted some episodes so brightly with such sly humour, with an almost inimitable sense of grotesquerie underlying and peeking out mischievously, that at length even the ambassador could not refrain from awarding him the appreciation of a smile. Fowler had broken the ice, had just for the time being switched the grieving man’s mind from the obsession of its fears. The party grew brighter, the gentleman on my right joined in, Fowler I believe tried his best to enliven his hour with us—and succeeded so well that the other guest came out of his shadow and enjoyed the sunshine of companionship. I am sure that worrying father was all the better for Fowler’s tonic, taken out of himself a little and there-

fore more ready to meet whatever the fates had in store for him—the worst, in this case, I was sorry to learn afterwards.

Out of a past fog emerges the figure of Sir Robert Borden. The fog lay like a blanket over the Mersey while we anchored five miles from the landing-stage, waiting for it to lift.

The Canadian Premier was fidgety, but there was no help for it. Nothing would urge me to risk a closer approach to the landing-stage in such conditions. The safety of the ship must be the first consideration ; personal convenience comes second. On one occasion a world-renowned violinist got very excited one afternoon as we were entering the Hudson. There was a thick fog and we were anchored. There was reason for his perturbation since he had an important concert engagement that night in New York. I would have done anything possible, but to proceed through that blanket was not possible and I'm afraid some distinguished audience went home that night disappointed.

The same with Sir Robert Borden. He told me elaborate arrangements had been made on shore for his speedy transport to London, where he was eagerly awaited by the Government. This was in 1918 and I had no doubt his journey was an urgent one. But I couldn't move—fog is no respecter of persons. We did all we could. We wirelessly to the landing-stage and a tender was sent for him. Into this he changed and the boat nosed off, lost to our view in a moment.

## HOME FROM THE SEA

Fate must have been smiling at the endeavours of mere man. Within half an hour the fog lifted—and we were at the landing-stage a few minutes after Sir Robert's tender arrived.

Recent criticism brings to mind the figure of the Hon. James Walker, the Mayor of New York. Of course I know nothing about his work in that high capacity, but I can say this: much has been said about his "lateness," but he is never late in doing a kind action. I've known him for years, and a better friend, a more considerate host or appreciative guest you could never find. The Hon. James Walker crossed with me in the *Berengaria*.

A thousand figures of world-renown in varying spheres: Lord Beaverbrook, Mr. Hearst (often misunderstood in England; he is not so much anti-British as pro-American and there's a great deal of difference), Sir Herbert Austin (he used to tell me how Americans laughed at his "kid" car, but in the end they have adopted it), Sir Harry McGowan, Lord Weir, Lord Marks, Sir John Cadman, Sir Eric and Sir Auckland Geddes; famous singers like Chaliapin (who, in that clipped accent of his, would talk on every subject save music), John McCormack, Tetrizzini (you can imagine the treat it was to have these great artists perform at our concerts); stage celebrities like Sir Harry Lauder (who wore kilts nearly all the time and always when coming on board or landing), Gracie Fields (gay, romping, at home in a moment with every one, who made her debut in America from my ship),

## MORE ATLANTIC NIGHTS

Evelyn Laye, Isobel Jeans, Isobel Elsom, Tom Mix, Ronald Colman—oh! enough names to fill a volume.

I have already mentioned that world-figure, Mr. Lloyd George. He once made me very embarrassed. Speaking generally, he was the most affable and pleasant of passengers, showing his "bigness" by the way he mixed with all classes on board and his interest in the organization and work of the ship. But one morning just before we arrived in New York I was unfortunate enough to be chief actor in an awkward predicament. We were at breakfast. Mrs. Lloyd George was on my right, Mr. Lloyd George on my left. The latter requested the cream for his coffee. I was reaching for it with my left hand as it was in front of me when at the same moment the eminent statesman decided he could get it for himself. Our joint endeavours collided, with the unhappy result that the jug capsized, the contents finding the most unsuitable of rests—in Mr. Lloyd George's lap!

How rapidly we adapt ourselves to altered conditions! I sometimes stood and looked on the jolly crowd of passengers. Women bejewelled and gowned in exquisite dresses (oblivious of the coming customs), men perfectly groomed—probably nowhere in the world could you find a smarter company—dancing, idling, playing cards. Every one care-free, out for enjoyment, starting late in the day, finishing often early in the morning. Then I would recall the little time ago when in utter darkness we plunged through the seas, alert for danger, knowing sister ships had



## HOME FROM THE SEA

sunk, and up there on the bridge, instead of the present comforts, was a small space screened off with canvas to shield a temporary bed. Many a night I had slept there, ready for whatever might spring out of the enveloping darkness.

CHAPTER XII  
THE AMERICANS

IT is only to be expected that the average stay-at-home Englishman looks at America from an English standpoint. If he could only see that country from that country's angle he would think very differently. Sometimes I am annoyed at the careless and sweeping criticism, entirely uninformed, which my fellow-countrymen—and women—make concerning the people of the United States.

Possibly few outside know the Americans better than I do. I can count my personal friends there by the hundreds ; I have visited them in their homes over many years, mixed with every class on shore and afloat, examined their institutions, argued about their problems and had first-hand knowledge of their characteristics which is not vouchsafed to many writers, who often go over on a round trip and return to write a book about that diverse people.

All these opportunities have been mine from my youth upwards, so that I have seen the people in course of development—an amazing, rapid growth which explains much of the demeanour in them that is apt to irritate the more insular Briton. How many visitors to-day looking at those remarkable

## HOME FROM THE SEA

buildings that greet their eyes as they enter New York harbour realize that thirty years ago there was hardly such a thing as a sky-scraper? America has become a nation as quickly as that, and I want to place on record here that it is with profound admiration that I regard her accomplishments.

I consider it one of the really vital subjects of the day—our attitude towards Americans and theirs towards us. A proper understanding between us—I do not mean formal political treaties but the spirit rather than the letter of association—is the chief plank in the platform of world peace. And I am convinced if that platform is not soundly constructed it is more our fault than America's. I do not speak of their interference in European affairs; they don't wish that and we need not hope for it; I am thinking that if all the rest of the world knows that in spirit and intent America is one with us and we with them, the influence on international affairs would reach to every corner of the globe and affect the plans and plots of every chancellery.

I am no politician, but every man who leaves his country and travels in others is, consciously or not, an ambassador either for mutual goodwill or mistrust, and in that capacity, concerning the United States at all events, I have played my part. I never forgot that foreigners looking at me as an Englishman were inclined to take me as a sample of my people, just as they take you as you may pass through a country. I am almost as much at home in America as in

## THE AMERICANS

England, and out of all my experiences and contacts with many different classes I am going to assert this :

America has a hand of friendship ready to shoot out to grasp Britain's—for our mutual advantage.

It is we who are half-hearted ; it is we who criticize too much, we who are inclined to be supercilious with a tinge of envy mixed. Why? Is it that we are jealous that this nation, to whom we taught almost everything, has outstripped us ; gone beyond, by reason of its youthful zeal, the teacher himself? It is not much more than thirty years ago that I myself was in a ship carrying bricks to America—bricks all the way from England for buildings in America ! She was also importing much of her machinery, iron and steel, her cotton and woollen goods—practically everything needed in the ordinary business of life. She developed with amazing speed ; discovered her mineral wealth, made her own machinery, built factories, and in the end developed mass production, and so angered us. It created a feeling of friction. But now we are following her ; we, too, are adopting mass production of many things—and by thus admitting the rightness of her methods, can we not take the opportunity to lose old jealousies and “ get together ” on a closer footing ?

Some of our big manufacturers are doing so, and it's all to the good of mutual relations. The Americans will still learn from us if they think we have anything to teach them. As I parenthetically mentioned,

## HOME FROM THE SEA

they took Austin's baby car, though goodness knows their own output of motors is stupendous.

Now I'm not out to belittle my own country—very far from it ; indeed, it is because, like millions more, I look upon it as the greatest empire in history that I plead for bigness in our relations with this young America. It will strengthen both nations. And the first thing to do is to see them from their own standpoint.

Think what England was when she was still centuries older than America, as a white nation, is today. We were almost a slave-wage country. Only half a century ago men and women all over the country were walking miles to work in the darkness of early morning and working all the hours of light there were for a mean pittance of a few shillings a week, scarcely enough to keep body and soul together. I can remember that myself in Lancashire—can still imagine I hear the clip-clop of their clogs as they passed my home from 5.15 to 5.45 a.m. and again from 5.45 p.m. to 6.15 p.m. as they trudged their weary but smiling homeward way. America is young, and no doubt is suffering from some of the follies of youth ; her boundless energy runs to other things than business production : to a lavish existence, to over-keenness in sport, to an idealism which, perhaps, sought results too quickly, as in the case of Prohibition. It runs also to what we call bragging. Let's take that.

To our phlegmatic natures it is irritating and undoubtedly reacts in our intolerance towards the

braggart. Well, while not condoning and certainly not defending it, it is possible to understand it and make allowance. In the first place, Americans talk big because they think big. Theirs is a big country—lakes, mountains, plains, trees, rivers, all big. They build great railroads which make ours of necessity seem pygmy ; they create great centres of industry, their buildings are outsize, and their colleges. Their wealth is on the colossal scale, and, by the way, we don't mind putting our finger into their rich pies and pulling out what plums we can ! Then when a crash comes—and they, too, are big—who are we to blame the pastrycook for the sudden lack of plums ?

Surely if anyone has a right to brag a little the American has, and be it said we are all inclined to brag a bit, even Englishmen and those at times who haven't much to brag about. Moreover, behind their big talk is a definite sense of loyalty. They are proud of being American, and we might be a little shamed by them instead of ashamed of them. Loyalty must be applauded, and I for one could wish a greater emulation of that desirable quality in our own people.

I have watched the school children over there parade before their Stars and Stripes and salute that flag. They are unabashed to display it on any and every occasion : it is an honour. How many schools are there in Great Britain where the children are paraded before the Union Jack to salute that emblem of union ? How many know what the crosses are and how the Union Jack came to be made ?

## HOME FROM THE SEA

But that is only one small aspect of their life. This intense spirit of nationality is evidenced in many other admirable ways. In their educational institutions, for instance. No members of other nationalities have donated half as much as Americans to colleges and such-like. Over there if a man leaves college, enters business, and is successful, he thinks nothing of giving a million dollars or more to enrich his old college, endowing scholarships, etc., so that other young men may have the best education possible. No wonder every State has fine colleges, and some of them are immense, with as many as 15,000 students.

The State schools, too, are both a credit and an honour to the country. And what a problem education is to them! Peoples from all ends of the earth have contributed their quota to make up the 125,000,000 inhabitants of the States. Millions of these did not know English when they landed as emigrants. What a huge undertaking to take this conglomerate mass and mould it into one nation, speaking one language, having in addition one national outlook. America is doing that—and all in a few generations.

With India very present in our minds just now, we ought to be able to sympathize with America in her racial troubles. Yellow, white and black—all races form part of her population. No simple task to hold the balance of justice between the varying rights to meet the differing opinions of Eastern, Middle West, West and the Southern states and still make it a land

## THE AMERICANS

of the free. Comparatively it is only in recent years that she has in any way restricted immigration, that perhaps is why in Chicago and other big centres to-day we hear so much of the gangsters. They're a bad lot ; no doubt about that. Where have they come from ? If you look at a police list you will find queer names, and we may feel a trifle of pride that few of those names are Anglo-Saxon. The scum of the world got in before restriction, and the staggering thing is that those who have handled the destinies of the land have been able to build up a nation so well.

Prohibition, of course, brought all this scum to the surface. That is a case in which the enthusiasm of youth carried them to an extreme. A few well-meaning folk got that 18th Amendment passed and no doubt thought they had made a tremendous stride forward in public morality—a lesson that would astonish and, they hoped, influence the world. It has been a fiasco, because wherever there is a preventing law there are always law-breakers who will batten on secretly satisfying a forbidden appetite. It is, of course, ludicrous that the chief class in America at the moment that is entirely in favour of Prohibition is the racketeers, the very people who make fortunes out of breaking that law ! But there is this to be said : we hear a great deal about the drinking that goes on in America, but very little about the millions who do not drink at all.

“ Well, all I've got to say,” remarked a big manufacturer to me when discussing the question once, “ is



## HOME FROM THE SEA

that my workpeople show a thirty per cent. greater efficiency since they can't drink. They don't because they can't afford to get it."

That's a side not often mentioned.

And for some time after the 18th Amendment came in many of the best people—the people who could afford it—kept the law.

I remember going to one friend's house and finding there was no liquor at all served at meals, no cocktails, no whisky. But a year later I was at that same house and there was everything. It had become the fashion to have secret "hooch." It was a bit of pride with people that they could get it and give it to guests. I raised my brows quizzically.

"Yes," my host admitted, "we do it now. Every one does. We don't think it is the thing, but we have to do it."

There was another house I used to visit outside New York. When drink was almost unknown I once slipped just an 8-oz. bottle of whisky into my pocket and handed it over. "It might come in some day when you have the 'flu," I suggested. Years later when I was there again the host solemnly told me that he had never had occasion to touch that spirit. "The cork has never been drawn, Rostron," he said; but, just as I was about to compliment him on his unusual law-abiding practice, his eyes twinkled and he added: "The corks of a good many other bottles, however, have been taken out since!"

Yet, you know, these are the people who should be

## THE AMERICANS

blamed in the first instance rather than those who profit by their delinquency. There is graft, yes. But if a man did not wish to get round the law the man who supplies him would have a pretty thin time. If the original sinner didn't exist you would not have the further evils of police who take bribes to keep their eyes shut or the politician who secretly supports the racketeers in order to get their votes.

“ Make money, honestly if you can—but make it.” That principle—or lack of principle—operates with a good many other than the American law-breaker. After all, where does much of the drink come from? How much from these islands of ours?

Prohibition is one of many problems facing the administration in America, and I venture to suggest that the best thinking people over there would like us the better if, instead of scoffing and ridiculing them, we showed a little sympathy.

It should be easy—there is so much to admire apart from this and other mistakes. They are so generous, both privately and as a nation. No other country gives away the millions they do. Think of the relief funds they have organized and operated in all parts of the world where they themselves have no interest other than the call of suffering humanity. In Russia, Poland, Armenia, Belgium—in almost every country they have distributed relief in great largess.

It is because they are children of nature, attractively sentimental. They have not the conventions built up through centuries, as we have, to colour their actions.

## HOME FROM THE SEA

They are not afraid to applaud or to play if they feel like it. No considerations of "what other people might think" affect them. They are more natural than we. As individuals to individuals, a man will say: "Come up to my place to dinner" with so easy a spontaneity that you know you are welcome. There is no question of "It isn't done," or "But, my dear, you don't know anything about him." He has met you, you are interested in each other—his house is yours.

And as a nation, I have reason indeed to know of American hospitality.

Only modesty, not lack of appreciation, forbids me enumerating details of the amazing cordiality of my reception when in company with my wife I was the recipient of many honours and guest at many celebrations following the rescue of the *Titanic* passengers. Everything they do is so thoroughly whole-hearted. We Britishers, too, can demonstrate our feelings, I know, but there is a difference, and all I want to ask is that we should seek to understand their ways just as they try to—and do—admire ours. Those among them, for instance, who have been honoured by an invitation to Buckingham Palace are always impressed by the dignity of royalty. I have been decorated by His Majesty and was also received by President Taft, so that I appreciate the difference between American and British ways. The former is an impressive ceremony with its sentries and its full-dress courtliness, while a visit to White House is much more like calling

at some big business house and asking to see the General Manager. But can't we admire the one without any loss of respect for the other?

I am emphasizing these points as a plea to understanding. By no word would I demean my own country. We can do what we like if we put our backs to it, and let me tell you the Americans are the first to admit that. "You've got what we haven't," said one to me not so long ago, and he enthused about some of our qualities. "You've got traditions. But don't let them be your master. Traditions are good ballast but poor cargo."

They have a high regard for our institutions. Here's an example. I was naturally often in America during that long period when King George was ill. They were as anxious as we were about his progress. And in speaking to me about the matter I never once heard them say: "Your King." It was always "The King." In the same way thousands of them can sing "God save the King," but how many Englishmen can sing "The Star-spangled Banner"?

I have found many Americans a bit downhearted about us, and especially since this Government came into power. They have a notion we ought to be more the live wires they are. They stand amazed at the way we let foreigners dump goods into our land. "We do it ourselves," they say, "but we don't understand why you let us." For business—big business—is their watchword. You find it in every class.

I remember once when I was in Alexandria, in the

*Carpathia*, a number of American sailors came aboard and I had a chat with them.

“Are you going to stick it?” I asked them, meaning were they going to stay at sea all their lives?

“No fear,” was the quick answer from one. “There’s nothing in it. Back to business for mine—and make some money.”

We are apt to deride that fetish of money-getting. But we go after it ourselves, those who have the brains and the energy. We are inclined to decry the rich American for his luxurious mode of life. Are they alone in this display? And why should not the wealthy man spend his money in the luxury of huge mansions in beautiful gardens, and give fabulous prices for pictures and objets d’art? The vendor is selling to the highest bidder—and the vendor enjoys the price.

The American works hard, plays hard and pays hard.

He likes us, admires our ways. This was illustrated the other day by a letter in all the papers from an American staying in England who wrote almost fulsomely about the courtesy he had encountered everywhere on his travels here. He was looking for the best in us. Do we look for the best in them, or are we too ready to speak casual, careless criticism of them and all their doings? Especially have I heard this in regard to their officials.

“I think the Custom officers here are bears,” I heard one Englishwoman remark, just because one

of them had caught her trying to squeeze through with half a dozen silk frocks on her. It reminds me of an incident I had to laugh over once. I was going ashore in New York one evening to keep a dinner appointment. It was very warm and I carried a light overcoat on my arm. At the gates an official came up to me and took my coat, unfolding it and refolding it. I really thought he was just putting it straight for me, but soon found he was giving me the "once over" to see if I carried anything dutiable. He completed his search. It was the first time I had ever suffered such an examination, but I made no objection, and when the Custom officer had run his hands all over me, with a nod he indicated I could pass. During the examination I did not say a word. When completed, I mentioned who I was and that I had never before been subjected to such a search, and, dumbfounded, he raised his cap and apologized most profusely.

"It's quite all right," I answered affably. "You were only doing your duty." Other officials near-by who knew me were fidgeting, but showed relief at my answer to his apologies.

We parted quite good friends.

That same trip the chief engineer was subjected to a similar experience. He came back to the ship fuming.

"What's the trouble?" I asked.

"Why, that confounded Customs officer dared to search me at the gate."

## HOME FROM THE SEA

“ Well? What did you do? ”

He was a bit sheepish and it came out that he had offered protest. That made the officer extra eager—perhaps suspicious. His search was very thorough, and when it was explained to him who the chief was it made no difference. Whereupon I told the chief my experience and my answer to the officer’s apologies.

There was another time that search parties boarded us. My steward came to my cabin and told me they were there—looking everywhere to see if they could find liquor.

“ All right. Let them search ; they are entitled to,” I told him.

Search they did. They came to my cabin and thoroughly went over it. I made no protest ; why should I? And when a little later a more responsible official apologized that his men had gone over my room I assured him I didn’t mind. It was just a matter of understanding the other fellow’s position. He was doing his job as he saw it, that was all. And if a man might have had cause for annoyance I had, for I was ever studiously careful about never contravening the country’s rules. I always respected the three-miles’ limit most scrupulously. There have been times, indeed, when the ship has been within the restricted area and, through fog or other reason, has had to anchor for a whole night. No amount of persuasion would ever induce me to have drink sold on board through that night if we were within the

## THE AMERICANS

zone—all “bars” were locked and sealed when the legal limit was reached.

These Custom officers have a difficult task and it's up to us to help rather than offer stupid interference and indulge petty pique. There are hundreds of people using all their wits to defeat them in their work, sneaking things in, apart from drink. One case came to my knowledge, showing to what lengths some will go to cheat the customs. The authorities, “from information received,” were aware that dope was being run. They had their suspicions of a particular ship—foreign. But search as they might they could not trace the stuff. One trip the vessel was really combed; the officials went over every inch of her as far as they could. Nothing! They shrugged and gave it up; their information must be wrong.

On the way off, one of the searching party, an inspector, was walking along an alley when something caught his coat and tore it. He pulled up and turned round. His jacket sleeve had caught on a nail and the nail had drawn out a piece of the panelling. It was a secret cupboard and inside was the dope they were looking for!

Occasionally one hears American sportsmanship criticized. Read and remember what many of our leading sportsmen have to say. I talked about this with Sir Malcolm Campbell after he had won the world's land speed record with the “Bluebird.” And also I can give you the opinions of several others: Mr. Scott Payne, for instance, and the late Sir Henry



Segrave—all have the highest opinion of them as genuine, clean sportsmen.

The Americans are as keen to win as the people of any other country. They are a little more thorough : training with them is a fetish. Should we grumble that they try a bit harder than we do ? But if they are beaten they do not stint their applause to the victor. They give honour, respect, encouragement—lavishly, as they give everything else. In sport there are regrettable incidents there as well as elsewhere, but in comparison no more there than in our own country. I have never heard them kick against us and they naturally don't like to be kicked.

It is absurd to quiz them about their speech. For want of a national term it is called English. It may not be our English, but we should feel honoured that they have retained the term. Do you expect an Oxford accent when they have had to educate millions of new-comers who on arrival could not speak a single word of English ? The fact that the country has taken them in and taught them a universal language and fused them into any sort of a united nation is remarkable. In the same way we should no longer refer to them as “our cousins.” They are not. They are a nation unto themselves, built from every other nation on earth, and I for one can appreciate that urge of patriotism in a man who boasts that he is “one hundred per cent. American.”

Nations have always risen following the course of the sun—China, Persia, Rome, Western Europe : the

## THE AMERICANS

next step was America. That does not mean the British Empire is "done." It isn't. We are passing through a bad time, but if we put our backs into it we shall pass through it. The King long ago issued the clarion call: "Wake up, England!" Believe me, no one on earth will be glad to see this Empire rouse itself and find its real strength more than the American.

As I said at the outset, his hand is out; he wants our friendship. He has no sympathies that are against us. He won't make treaties with us, but he doesn't want to put his finger in our pie.

He wants nothing from us save understanding. That ought to be forthcoming. What barrier there is between us is raised by our supercilious intolerance of his small foibles. If my small weight has helped to push that obstruction aside, I have not written in vain.

## CHAPTER XIII

### “THE LINER SHE’S A LADY”

THAT line of Kipling’s often runs through my head when I think of the *Mauretania*. During these reminiscences I have spoken of many happenings on her decks. Let me tell you something about the ship herself.

She’s a lady. To my view she is the most beautiful ship ever afloat. With all her largeness she has the graceful lines of a yacht. In fact, if you glance at the photograph of her in her white and green when a hospital ship, she looks just like some huge, luxurious yacht. And what glory surrounds her career! In peace and war she has played a great part and is still one of the greyhounds of deep waters. It is true she has recently lost to the *Bremen* the blue riband of the Atlantic, but for years she held it and to-day she keeps time like an express train; to-day, though she is over twenty-three years old—quite middle-aged!

Come aboard. If by chance you have travelled on her, I am bold enough to think you will enjoy another look round; perhaps your experience of her was confined of necessity to her decks and saloons and cabins. But if you have not walked her planks, look at the grace of her. She is big and luxurious, but

## “ THE LINER SHE’S A LADY ”

those features are not exclusively hers ; indeed, there are many liners larger. The *Berengaria* for instance, my last command.

But the *Mauretania* was built for speed as well as comfort. I knew the day I set out to make the record that she could do it. She already had created the fastest time on the shorter run, away back in 1910, from New York to Ireland—four days ten hours and forty minutes. What I was after was the record for the New York to Cherbourg crossing.

It was in August, 1924, and no one knew of the intention except Mr. Cockburn, the chief engineer, and myself. No point in circulating the intention, because anything might happen to interfere with our project. Fog, for instance—indeed, we did run into a hazy spell when there was a question of proceeding at full speed. Our view was, however, that it was but a temporary inconvenience, and we were right : it soon lifted.

Except for that, we had fine weather, light breezes and a smooth sea.

We knew from the outset—the Chief and I—that we were doing it. Our first day’s run was a record. So was the second. One or two seasoned travellers began to raise their brows in surprise, for, remember, the run is always public property—the sweep each day is won on the official figure. In that pool, apart from ten numbers around the normal day’s figure, someone often buys the “ high field ” and the “ low field,” i.e. anything above the actual numbers auctioned and

anything below. The man who had the "high field" was winning.

Passengers began to sit up and take notice. On the third day the run was higher than ever before.

"I say, are you out to create a record passage?" a man at my table asked me that night.

"Oh no; just out to do our best, that's all," I replied.

But they knew all right. The next day we still held on, the figures were still high and they noticed we carried on in spite of the haze which that day narrowed the visibility. Out of the mist loomed a four-masted sailing ship. She just lolled up into view and in a few minutes rolled back into the mist. Not many barques like her about nowadays. She brought back visions of my early experiences in sail. Then and now! A windjammer almost becalmed, and what was the world's fastest liner making a record run! We must have been a fine sight to those on board that barque, just as she stood out for a little while beautiful to us as we sped by.

Excitement grew on board. Naturally every member of the crew was interested, but their enthusiasm was nothing compared with that of the passengers. Every day when the run was posted there was a crowd as intent as watchers of a horse-race, and at all hours of the day and night little throngs gathered about the rail watching the water swishing past far beneath. Lots of wagers were made for varying amounts, and I believe everyone was as



*Photo: Topical Press*

CAPTAIN ROSTRON CONGRATULATED BY MR. COTTLRELL, SOUTHAMPTON  
MANAGER OF THE CUNARD LINE, AFTER RECORD VOYAGE TO CHERBOURG



“ THE LINER SHE’S A LADY ”

pleased as I and the Chief were when that bit of haze lifted.

The progress of the ship was the chief entertainment that voyage when once it was obvious we were out for the record, and old travellers were comparing notes almost hourly. When at length we arrived in sight of land it was certain we had made the fastest crossing ever set up, and as soon as we stopped we were able to answer all inquiries with the information that the official time—it is taken from the Ambrose Channel Lightship to the moment of stopping in Cherbourg—was five days one hour, showing an average speed for the entire voyage of 26.25 knots—roughly 30 miles an hour.

Every one was delighted. That trip remained in many a memory apart from my own; ever since I have repeatedly had passengers come up to me and remarking: “I was with you, Captain, when you made the record crossing in the *Mauretania*.”

From that day until the first voyage of the bigger German *Bremen* in 1929 the *Mauretania* easily held the record. Many other vessels attacked it, but none came anywhere near her. The only one which really rivalled her was her sister ship, the *Lusitania*, familiarly known as the “Lucy,” whose brutal and unnecessary loss was so much deplored by every decent person.

While on this subject of speed one or two illustrations come to mind. I have already told how during the war we had to reduce speed in a seaway for convenience and safety of our escort destroyers, and



## HOME FROM THE SEA

sometimes in heavy seas and bad weather our escort had to return to port. And I recounted how we injured our steering-gear when we were filled with American troops ready to come over into the firing line. But I did not mention in that latter instance one fact which is strikingly illustrative of the ship's speed.

After those troops had been transhipped we were held up in dock for over a week while repairs were carried out. The troops had gone several days before we were ready again for sea. We then took on a new complement and set off. I was naturally distressed at the delay that had been occasioned and from the start went "all out" all the way over. As a result we reached our destination and disembarked our troops a full two days before the transports which had left New York several days ahead of us!

It gives not only an idea of the ship's speed in comparison with some other vessels, but also is an illuminating commentary on the value of such a ship in time of war. She was a real bulwark during that period of direst need, and it makes me think that British people don't appreciate the great honour of owning such a vessel. America knows more about the *Mauretania* than English people, they praise her more, admire her, use her, recognize her qualities and her achievements. Yet it is Britain she typifies, not America—the Britain that stands for efficiency and reliability and the highest flights in wonderful workmanship. Considering we are essentially a mari-

“ THE LINER SHE'S A LADY ”

time nation, I have often deplored the lack of patriotism and pride that ownership of a ship like the *Mauretania* should inspire, and if anything I have said helps to create an interest in our merchant navy I am well rewarded.

But even the speeds already referred to were not her best.

That was achieved one day on another occasion when I received an S.O.S. from a ship called the *Laleham*. It did not produce the dramatic climax of the *Titanic* disaster, but there is never a call for aid in mid-ocean that does not provoke the tingle of great excitement accompanied by the urgent desire to bring aid to the stricken.

For that, after all, is the first creed of those who use the sea—comradeship. We may be competitors in business, vying with each other for business and for records, but in face of ultimate danger and at the call of help sailors are one fraternity, and never by any chance ignore an opportunity to succour those in distress. Often have I received requests for help other than because the calling ship is in peril. There have been numerous occasions when illness or accident has happened on ships at sea which have not the necessary equipment for dealing with the troubles. A call has come sometimes from hundreds of miles away. It may be that the captain wants only to know if he is treating some case of sickness in the right way. Our surgeon has either agreed or wirelessed advice for other treatment. At other times trouble more

## HOME FROM THE SEA

serious has demanded operation or maybe amputation. These things cannot be done except by thoroughly qualified men with all the requisite implements. Occasionally I have altered courses and steamed to the vicinity, and once at least I recollect when fortunately we were on the spot—fortunately, since the other ship had no wireless.

It was one evening in mid-Atlantic, and we sighted her—a barque with signals flying. I made up to the vessel to read his signals and found he wanted surgical assistance as one of the crew had had a bad accident.

I stopped the *Mauretania* and lay to, sending a boat over with the surgeon to see what could be done. The boat was away over an hour, and on returning on board the surgeon made his report, had done everything possible. We offered to bring the patient on board so that we could quickly reach land, whereas the sailing ship might be weeks away from a port. But he preferred to stay on his ship.

And once we ourselves had to seek aid. That was a curious incident that I might mention *en passant*. We had on board a dozen snakes, six of them poisonous. They were being taken to some zoo. A keeper, of course, was with them. On the second night out one of these reptiles died, and the following morning the keeper was in the act of taking the carcass from the pen when he was bitten by one of its poisonous brethren. Now we carry all sorts of queer travellers, but not often does the surgeon have to handle a case

“ THE LINER SHE’S A LADY ”

of snake-bite. He, at once, attended the man and did what he thought was best. But snake poison is something of a special study, and he suggested we might get expert opinion if that were possible. So we sent a wireless to the curator of the Zoo in New York, explaining the position, the nature of the snake and the treatment that had so far been applied and asked : was this the best we could do for the sufferer ?

“ Your treatment correct,” came back the answer, and the man duly recovered.

What a sidelight on the difference between modern conditions at sea and the old windjammer days ! Whatever was done then was carried out by the captain—no doctor at all, mark you—and no one nearer probably than a couple of months to bring more professional aid.

Yet there were we, 1,200 miles from land, able to get the world’s best advice. *And we received that curator’s answer within seven minutes of sending out the request !*

All this time the *Laleham* is waiting ! Immediately on receipt of her S.O.S. I turned my ship at once. Her position was 180 miles away. It was probable that there was shipping in closer proximity than I was, but I interviewed the chief engineer, explained the circumstances, and away he went to get all possible speed out of the ship—a nasty sea on at the time too. The *Laleham* was a cargo steamer, British, and her message stated that all her boats had been washed away and she was on her beam-ends.

## HOME FROM THE SEA

For several hours I held on the course and then happily received a message that the British tanker *Shirvan* was in the vicinity and had rescued the crew. As the crew were saved it was useless proceeding out of our course any farther, so we headed for New York.

I mention this incident, not because it is specially out of the ordinary run of operations at sea, but because, during that dash to the rescue, the *Mauretania* had a chance of really stretching her legs and showing what the fastest of all the ocean greyhounds could do. Until that day she had never exceeded 27.4 knots, while her recognized speed was 25½, but we never went quite so fast as we did then.

This liner is not only a lady, but a very decorative one. Her adornments are such as you will rarely find even in the most stately homes of England. She has the handsomest woodwork in the world, fashioned and carved so wonderfully that it is the envy of connoisseurs. I have seen millionaires—especially Americans—regarding it with envy. I fancy some of them would part with a goodly portion of their wealth to transfer it to their own homes.

Her cost may not seem enormous in these days of high prices. It was £1,750,000, but that does not represent her worth to-day. You could treble that figure to find her present value. A good deal has been done to her since first her 72,000 horse-power engines were installed. For one thing, she was coal-fuelled then, and there is a story about her change over to oil.

It was in July, 1925, and one Wednesday morning,

“ THE LINER SHE’S A LADY ”

while I was peacefully sleeping at home in Liverpool, where I then lived, my son burst into the room thrusting a paper into my hands and saying : “ Here, read that.”

The headline leapt at me. “ *Mauretania* is on fire.”

At 9.30 I was at the office. The Marine Superintendent and I went in to see the General Manager. It was true ; down in Southampton the ship was on fire. He instructed us to go at once and report the damage.

I am afraid we gloomily expected to see the vessel burned out, though how a fire could have started while lying in dock was more than I could understand ; there had been no sign of it, you may be sure, when I left her the previous evening.

She was not destroyed, as we now know, but one of the sections under the dining-room had been pretty well gutted. The firemen had kept the damage to that and we were duly grateful. But it was sufficiently extensive to make it impossible to go to sea. At least that was my view. The Company did suggest that the portion might be boarded up—there was no deep-seated injury which made the vessel unseaworthy—but knowing something of the psychology of passengers, I couldn’t imagine a shipload of them being comfortable with the evidence of a fire constantly before their eyes. We also found it would not have been possible to utilize the lower dining-room as the floor (deck) had been set up with the heat below. Just because, contrary to the most stringent rules, a

silly shore man had started cleaning some carpets on board with benzine and somehow got it ignited, that great vessel was to be laid up for months. And sometimes folk have thought me a stickler for discipline !

Well, I took her to Newcastle, and they say an ill wind blows someone a bit of good ; at all events, the directors seized this opportunity to change her from a coal- to an oil-burning ship. Oil is the better fuel ; it made her faster. You get varying revolutions of the engines from coal because the supply cannot be absolutely regular, seeing it is applied by hand labour, while oil is steady. It makes a difference of several revolutions per hour, and that counts over a day. It's more costly, however, for though the *Mauretania* burned over 1,000 tons of coal per day and about 750 tons of oil, the latter is three times as expensive, being something like three pounds a ton. That means a daily bill of £2,500 for fuel alone.

I remember the first crossing after her refitting. I naturally wanted to see what she could do under the new conditions. She was making over 25 knots when we were well out in the Atlantic, and we had sea right ahead with a fresh westerly breeze. I had been on the bridge most of the afternoon but had an arrangement to take tea with some people. At a quarter to four I went to keep the appointment. Tea was on the table in the upper foyer, and we were gossiping, when I felt a sudden change in the wind. It was coming through the starboard door and immediately

“ THE LINER SHE’S A LADY ”

caught my attention. Since the wind was right ahead there should have been no extra draught on one side. I knew therefore the vessel had for some reason veered from her proper course.

I said nothing, but wondered—wondered more when I noticed the throb of the engines had ceased ; then the way of the ship fell off.

Now one of the duties that falls to a captain’s lot is not to create any alarm ; on the contrary, to do everything to allay it. So I did not jump up, but sat there, knowing, at all events, whatever had happened, there was no immediate danger. In a couple of minutes I saw an officer running towards us. I put up my hand to warn him to keep silence and, making an excuse, joined him. Then I learned that we had dropped a propeller and a specially-arranged governor had automatically stopped the engines. Those passengers afterwards expressed surprise that we had taken it all so calmly, but even the loss of a propeller, I suppose, is all in the day’s job at sea.

Not that it makes no difference. Of the four propellers on the ship only the two inner ones were available for purposes of manœuvring. It was one of these we had dropped, and you can imagine how awkward it was to handle that large ship when we came to port with one propeller, giving her a side-ways tendency which had to be corrected by the rudder.

She was not the first ship I commanded that was fitted with turbines. That was the *Carmania*, but the



## HOME FROM THE SEA

latter vessel was a try-out for the later and bigger vessels. The Cunard Company naturally wanted to hold the blue riband for England, and no expense or effort was spared to that end. The *Mauretania* was the result, and valiantly she justified all the hopes reposed in her. Many passengers in those days would travel on no ship other than the *Mauretania* or *Lusitania*. As evidence of this let me recount one incident.

It was once when we were leaving Cherbourg. I learned the facts afterwards, for I saw only the finish of what was really an exciting experience.

It seems a saloon passenger quietly walked into our Paris office wanting to get the ship from Cherbourg.

“The boat train left two hours ago, sir,” he was informed.

“Perhaps I might fly,” suggested the passenger.

Our people made inquiries but found, after a short time, that it was impossible to arrange for an aeroplane. The would-be traveller shrugged. “Then I must go by car,” he murmured.

He went out and obtained the fastest car he could and set off. It's quite a bit of a run from Paris to Cherbourg and he overhauled that train a good deal. Not quite, however, and as his car pulled up at the dock he found the tenders had left the quay and were actually alongside the liner, embarking the passengers.

Still unperturbed, he hired a motor-boat and, racing out of the harbour, managed to join the pilot boat. From this he transferred to the last tender just

“ THE LINER SHE’S A LADY ”

leaving the ship’s side. The gang-plank had actually been removed, but the crew replaced it and, unbothered, he stepped on board.

That man was lucky, for we make no waits, keeping to a time-table that, as I have said, might be envied by some railways. Which reminds me of a cartoon Mr. Tom Webster drew of me once. It showed me on the bridge of the *Mauretania*, and underneath he wrote : “ Captain Rostron catching the 3.15.” When anyone sees it they want explanations. It really puts on record that fact already mentioned that the ship ran so closely to time that I practically always—save for extreme hindrance through fog or other weather vagaries—managed in those days to get ashore in time to catch the same train—the 3.15—for Liverpool.

Nine years I had the *Mauretania*. We never let each other down. Through fog, rain, snow, calm, gale, frost, she always came smiling through, and it was a sore trial to leave her. Just before we parted there occurred what to me was a memorable night.

We were on our way back from New York, the first week of July, 1926. A large number of friends were crossing that trip, but I hadn’t seen much of them as on the Friday it set in foggy and I was a good deal on the bridge. It would be about 1.30 on Saturday morning when the blanket rolled away. I wasn’t sleepy, so did not immediately turn in. Instead, I ordered a cup of coffee to be brought up to the bridge and stood drinking it while talking about the weather to the senior officer of the watch. We were on the

weather side, when I saw the wireless officer groping his way in the dark.

“Yes? Do you want me?” I called out, more to give him direction than anything else.

“Yes, sir,” he said, and seemed a trifle excited. “I’ve just received the ‘news’ (for the daily paper which is published on board) and—could you come into your chart-room, sir?”

I supposed he had some special reason to want me to read the day’s news in the middle of the night, so in I went. I commenced reading the bulletin at the top, but he interrupted.

“That’s not it. Here, sir—here!” pointing to an item lower down.

“Liner Captain Honoured,” I read, and there, to my surprise, saw my name.

That was how I received the news that His Majesty had conferred on me the honour of Knighthood, creating me K.B.E.

You may, perhaps, knowing something of the usual procedure in such cases, and wonder how it came about that this was the first intimation I had. It is customary for the suggested recipient of a title to be acquainted with the intention before the Prime Minister sends forward the name for the King’s approval. Only afterwards did I learn that Mr. Baldwin had written to me. His letter had arrived in Liverpool the very day I had sailed—a fortnight previously—and there it was when I returned, unopened. Evidently he had acted on the old adage that silence

“ THE LINER SHE’S A LADY ”

spells consent, and so there was I suddenly and all unsuspectingly with a title to my name. I have been fortunate enough to receive many favours, but none have given me greater pleasure than to have one from His Majesty.

Just previously I had had the rare distinction of having the Freedom of the City of New York bestowed on me, and one day while we were lying in Cherbourg Harbour, the French Government had made me Chevalier of the Legion of Honour ; and in mentioning that few men in the Merchant Navy have been more honoured than I have been, I want very sincerely to say that whatever credit has caused this approval is very largely due to the officers and men who have served under me. To them I extend my appreciation and thanks for very splendid and loyal service. Always, in peace time at any rate, we were a happy ship.

By breakfast time that July day naturally enough the news was round the ship, and we made rather a gala day of it. Several of my friends on board, having regard to the recent atmospheric conditions, thought it a good joke to christen me the “ Foggy Knight.”

The next day was another gala occasion, for it was July 4th, a very important date. It was the birthday of the Independence of the United States and also the birthday of the Cunard Company (just ninety years old). At the double event the best orators on board had a field day, and some of the speeches were excellent, while other orators confined themselves

to a very few words, such as : “ Same again, please ! ” It was always a jolly party held those nights under three inspiring emblems—the Union Jack, the Stars and Stripes, and the grand old Cunard flag.

That very same month I stood on the dock at Southampton and saw my old ship leave without me. It was a bit of a wrench ; but the call came and had to be obeyed.

I was to take over the *Berengaria*, and my first impression on joining was the hugeness of her : how small the *Mauretania* in comparison. However, within a couple of days I was quite at home and settled down.

I found the *Berengaria* the most comfortable ship I was ever in. The ship’s company consisted of as fine a lot of men as anyone could wish to command. And very soon the “ *Berengaria* smile ” was Atlantic wide and a feature of the ship, hard to resist or even miss.

For over four years I had command of this splendid vessel, and from August 1st, 1928, I had the honour of being appointed Commodore of the Cunard Fleet.

It was the top of my particular ladder and, as I climb down, tuck it away in the garden shed, and retire into the welcome place of a happy domestic circle, it may be interesting to look across the years and observe some of the remarkable changes that have occurred at sea as between Then and Now.

CHAPTER XIV  
THEN AND NOW

**F**ROM being an apprentice in a crack full-rigged sailing ship to the commander of one of the world's biggest liners is a big jump—and the stride covers much of the romance of travel by sea.

In the 'eighties it was something of an adventure to cross the ocean ; now it is little but a jolly holiday. Then people went because they had to ; now they go because they like to.

In the same way to the young sailor his dreams of the future always centred on beautiful sailing ships, long days in tropic seas, the shouted orders to clew up sail or man the lee fore brace ; now his ambitions are to wear gold braid and walk the decks of a luxury liner.

Steam to us in the old days was anathema. I can recall very vividly how when, on the *Conway* lying in the Mersey, the first really big steamer was towed past us. How we scoffed at her ungainly appearance, reviled her lack of "lines." We blessed her, too, because the senior boys were given extra night watches—to raise an alarm if the mammoth chunk of ugliness broke from her moorings and drifted down on us. That ship was the famous *Great Eastern*, then the largest

## HOME FROM THE SEA

vessel afloat—so great according to available tackle in those days that there had been excitement about the very fact that she was safely launched. After innumerable delays and difficulties, Tangye's, of Birmingham, constructed the gear for the launching, and the papers at the time were full of the marvellous accomplishment. Tangye's themselves afterwards used to say: "We launched the *Great Eastern* and the *Great Eastern* launched us." It made their reputation.

She was the leviathan of her time but, Jove! she was no beauty, and certainly we boys much preferred to see clipper sailing ships in the docks along the river. Tall tapering masts filled the skyline in those days and the banks of the river teemed with shipyards. Practically every week a new vessel would be launched, and noise of riveting could be heard all day and often throughout the night. A hive of industry, a city of prosperity—and a world of romance to me.

It was the chief delight of the cadets to get "day leave" so that we could mouch round the docks and go on board these ships. They seemed redolent of foreign ports—often they had brought cargoes of spices and tea and coffee from distant lands—and our youthful hearts glowed and were impatient for the time when we should be through our schooling and be able to set sail and see the world. It came soon enough.

What a "drift" from then to now! Long days of calm come back to mind when we lay on a glassy sea

## THEN AND NOW

with not a breath of air. Even then when some steamer would pass us, we had no envy of it ; that was not sailing as we imagined it. The steamer brought but little respect and I can recall a day when I stood on the dock side in Port Pirie, Australia, and wondered how a small dirty steamer I gazed at—about 1,500 tons—could have managed to steam all the way there from England.

But steam was coming into its own when I was a boy. My lot was sail, which meant voyages lasting half a year with weevily biscuits for chief diet, our pound and pint and sometimes not the one or the other, working all hours of light and dark, straining to the last ounce to help the ship come through ; but sometimes one couldn't withhold admiration for the new liners as they steamed majestically into harbour. The Cunard Company's *Etruria* and *Umbria* were afloat then, the White Star *Germanic* and *Britannic*, and the Inman *City of Paris* and *City of New York*, to mention only a few. Proud ships—yet what pygmies in comparison to the great liners of to-day ! England had the cream, though the United States and Germany, especially the latter, were showing keen competition. And not many years were to elapse—though then we would not have believed it—before the masts of the “ tall ships ” were to be displaced by smoking funnels ; the romance of ocean travel to give way to the hard grind of business necessity.

I can even now re-live an hour when in the old *Redgauntlet* we sailed down Channel with a good stiff



## HOME FROM THE SEA

north-east breeze and passed a steamer of 2,000 tons—outsailed her, for we were making twelve knots to her ten. With a sort of pity we regarded her belching smoke spoiling the clean surface of the water. And even when I reached the day that I reported to the Chief Superintendent of the Cunard Line, only half my heart was in the job. I didn't take to the notion of steam.

To show how I jibbed, let me tell you of the first steamer I was appointed to. It belonged to a Liverpool company who ran a regular cargo service to Boston—cargo and cattle.

Immediately on reporting on board I went down to my cabin and, having tidied up a bit, left for the deck. I wanted to see what a cattle steamer looked like at close quarters. All I saw was a great opening of a hatch with half a dozen cargo falls working from as many winches with a noise like nothing I had ever heard before in a ship. They were being driven for all they were worth since the ship was due to leave the next day on the noon tide.

Fearful doubts began to take shape in my mind. I walked on moodily. The decks were littered with hatches, beams and all manner of strange impedimenta; everything dirty, everything apparently in disorder. I came to another dark opening of a hatch. More winches grinding—it seemed there were thousands trying to make themselves heard all over Liverpool. It was terrible in my eyes—and ears!

I stood there thinking for a few minutes. Then I

## THEN AND NOW

made one of those decisions which affect one's whole life. I decided this cattle steamer was not for me. Down I went to what was to have been my cabin. I put on my overcoat and with my stick in my hand walked ashore. There I sent a wire to the owners regretting I could not sail. What a relief it was! Instead of going to sea that night I went home, and had a week's holiday and even then felt I hadn't ridded my system of the reek of that cattle steamer.

Suppose I had stuck it and sailed—how different everything might have turned out, for it was because I jibbed I happened to join the Cunard.

One of the greatest changes at sea has been in communications. Occasionally when in sail the captain of an outward-bounder would signal a homeward-bound ship asking if he would take mail back for us. The reply was always in the affirmative and then we rushed to our cabins joyfully to write a letter home. Both ships hove-to. Out swung a boat manned by willing hands and in it were a few buckets filled with potatoes and perhaps cabbages to pay expenses and incidentally to give a treat to the other ship's officers and crew who probably had not tasted fresh vegetables for weeks. Signals would be exchanged at parting, and each vessel trimmed their yards and went away on their different courses.

Now we are in touch with the entire world wherever we may be. It must be fully eight years ago that I first spoke by wireless telephone over a hundred miles to the captain of the *Olympic* and, later, I talked from

## HOME FROM THE SEA

mid-Atlantic to Mr. F. A. Derry at the Cunard head office in Paris. Now conversation from mid-ocean is common. A famous author or actor will sit in his cabin and be interviewed by a man looking down on the Fleet Street traffic.

By the way, it may not be known, even in this age of marvels, that an operator using Morse or other code can be identified by another.

“Hullo ; there’s a new man on at So-and-So,” I have heard our officer say. He recognized that the usual operator was not working ; these men can distinguish each other’s touch as readily as you and I can recognize the speaking voice of a friend over the telephone. During the war an expert at Wireless headquarters in France told me they were in the habit of picking up the communications sent out from Zeppelins in flight to their base in Germany. They could recognize each airship by its wireless “note” and by that were able to know what ships were in flight, just where they were, and send the information to London about the very “Zeps” which were even then attacking the city.

Then again, in sail we were entirely out of touch with all happenings on land for months at a time. A modern passenger pokes his head out of his cabin at eight o’clock and takes his daily paper from the bell boy just as naturally as the resident in Suburbia—the paper which has been edited, set up and printed on board during the night and contains information just as recent and up to date as the London daily the

## THEN AND NOW

business man reads on the way to his office. And speaking of the business man, his affairs are no longer necessarily left behind him when he steps on an Atlantic liner. There is a sort of Stock Exchange on board ; shares can be bought and sold. And very often a transaction is carried out from mid-ocean with an office in New York or London, contact between the passenger and his broker being established in under three minutes.

The wireless is used to an enormous extent for private messages. The Cunard Company own their own installation and in the course of a voyage as much as £700 will be taken in payment for messages sent by passengers. That is only one more convenience that time has brought to improve life at sea.

There are countless others making for comfort. The latter are all unrealized by the passengers, but if they could go back a quarter of a century they would very soon perceive the advantages they have in comparison in the matter of food and warmth and opportunities for enjoyment. When I pause to consider the electric heating and lighting of the present liners, my mind goes back to the days in windjammers when we had nothing but candles and swinging oil lamps—which always stank. And that lamp comprised the heating arrangements too !

And food. I can see myself now as an apprentice dodging along a slippery deck which was tilted at a severe angle, trying to balance my mess kid, holding it above my head when a sea came over the side as

## HOME FROM THE SEA

I made an uncertain and precarious way from the galley to our quarters under the poop. Sometimes we boys would take five minutes to make that short passage when the ship was labouring. Half-way along the deck we would perchance ship a heavy sea. There was nowhere to shelter ; we had to get our legs across the spare spar that was lashed fore and aft on deck and hold on for dear life, our concern the greater for the safety of the " kid " we held aloft out of reach, we hoped, of the water, than for ourselves. Between the crashing seas we would make sporadic dives aft until at length, at the entrance to our berth, a messmate would help us in with our precious cargo while we stepped hurriedly over the two-foot-high washboards and slammed to the door behind us. Anxious times forsooth, since, if we capsized our " kid " *en route*, there was no going back for more ; there was no more and we went hungry. All we had was the bare Board of Trade allowance which was scarcely enough to keep body and soul together. Except in one way.

We boys used to bring aboard a chest of extra grub when we started on a voyage and on one ship there was a rascally old steward. Now our only hope for extra rations was to obtain some of the stuff left over from the cabin where the officers messed. This we got from the steward. But the latter was wise to our sea chests and their contents and he developed a business instinct that might have made him so successful on shore that it would have landed him in gaol. Oh

## THEN AND NOW

yes, we could have a whack of grub if . . . and he would mention that he could do with a new shirt or something. The bargain was struck—we lost our spare shirts, but we got a bit of extra food. I'm afraid our mothers would have been surprised if they could have seen that steward's washing when it hung out on the line to dry. "Why, that's yours—and that—and that," they would have cried out—and they would have been perfectly right. We used to admire our nice clean clothes—on the steward's line.

Even water was precious then. It was served out each day except in bad weather when it was measured out to last several days. That was because the pipe from the fresh-water tank led up on deck and was there fitted with a brass cap. Since this had to be undone in order to get the water and, knowing full well that in a sailing ship we were half our time wallowing on wet decks, can you imagine anything quite so absurd as that arrangement? There were days when we couldn't unscrew that cap—it was the most stupid contrivance ever put on a ship.

Glance into the dining-room of the *Berengaria*. It is as ornate, as attractively laid out with its spotless napery and it is most often as steady as the dining-room of a West End hotel. Every dish is the best an artist in the kitchen can devise. The orchestra is playing. Well-dressed men and women eat daintily and sip expensive wines. Now look back forty odd years. We have just hauled on deck a couple of buckets of sea water and into them are dumped lumps

## HOME FROM THE SEA

of salt pork—so salt that to soak them in sea water makes them fresher and more palatable. And this, mark you, is given out with no generous hand—it is carefully weighed—and treasured.

We managed to cadge one extra apart from the bargaining with the steward. This was water for cocoa at night and it was because we made a cup for the officer on watch that he saw we had the necessary materials. One dark night it was my turn to make cocoa. It was blowing fresh with an occasional sea tumbling over the rail. Foolishly I went along the weather side of the deck to the galley, the door of which was abreast of the fore rigging. I had opened the galley door, had just time to see the cook, carpenter, sailmaker and donkey-man sitting on the bench before the fire smoking, when we shipped a lump of a sea in the fore rigging. The first thing I knew was that I was sprawling in the lee scuppers. That sea had lifted me into the galley, swept me right across it, and deposited me through the other door and on to the deck again. It had also done much the same for the galley's occupants! We were all mixed up in the scuppers together, and you may take it as official that the language was neither polite nor complimentary. But I learned my lesson and on a bad night the weather side of the deck knew me no more.

I lost one comrade in the old *Cedric*. He was coming from the deck aft about 2.30 in the middle watch. A big sea was running, mountains high. Before he reached the poop one of those mountains

ran at us and came down like thunder on the deck. Every man at such a moment seized anything handy in order to hold on for his life. But this boy was caught without any shelter or available hand-hold. The sea picked him up, lifted him right over the rail and we never saw more of him.

Yet which were the great days—those or these? At any rate those were filled with high adventure when a boy's heart would sing with the joy of living and the fervour of rude health. And how much we miss here on the Atlantic run with our days given to ease and pleasure, comfort of body and the satisfying of luxurious appetite. These good folk going to and fro in big ships seldom see the real wonders of deep waters. I catch a fleeting glimpse of a slim youth perched aloft in the mizzen with the quiet of a tropic sea all round him. He was a young apprentice named Rostron. He was "admirin' of the view" that morning. There had just been a squall of rain and as he paused in his job a moment there grew across the sky an amazing thing. A complete rainbow—or rather should I call it a rain-circle? For the vivid colours not only made a perfect arc across the entire dome above him but to his wide eyes marked unbroken paths from the horizon on each side, making it seem as though that brilliant band ran in a complete circle above and below with the ship in the centre. The arc was slightly flattened in its reflection on the water, giving the effect of an oval.

In these northern latitudes you don't get the



## HOME FROM THE SEA

apparent phenomenon that I have seen—of rain pouring on one side of the ship's deck while the other side is absolutely dry, so sharply defined are some tropical storms.

Another interesting thing I witnessed as a boy was the formation of a waterspout and its dissolution. The lower part of a black (nimbus) rain-cloud began to form in the shape of an elephant's trunk. Slowly it commenced to swing backwards and forwards. As it did so I noticed the sea immediately under this trunk show signs of disturbance. This increased while that trunk end for all the world seemed to reach downwards—seekingly. Suddenly there came a rush upwards of the water and the cloud trunk darted to meet it as though it were a long-lost friend. There they were—cloud and water locked in an embrace, and in that position the whole column travelled across the face of the deep, until at length it broke, the upper part receding into the clouds, the lower simply flopping back into the ocean.

And the sport we used to have during the lazier spells from work !

When porpoises were playing round the bows and the exigencies of work would allow, we would get out on the dolphin striker with a grains-harpoon, which had five prongs, and harpoon the porpoises. When we caught one it meant fresh meat for several days for all hands. The porpoise would be triced tail up under the after skids and the cook would cut steaks.

Benito was "grained" in a similar manner.

Flying fish were always greatly appreciated, as they have a delightful flavour and the ship's cat or cats also took away every opportunity of picking one up on the deck as it flopped about. Sometimes they would fly right over the ship's rail, but the usual procedure was to keep the square ports open in the bulwarks. At night we held a lamp near the port and the fish would make for the light, but we had to be pretty smart to pick them up else the cat would pounce on them immediately.

Off the Horn we fished for albatross, mollyhawks and Cape pigeon. The albatross is a noble bird—beautiful on the wing with sometimes a span of 14 to 15½ feet, tip to tip of wing, and weighing fifteen or more pounds. We caught these birds with a piece of pork as bait on a fair-sized hook which we towed astern on a good stoutline. It was most interesting and exciting.

There was quite an unusual amount of superstition about catching an albatross ; it was supposed to bring bad luck. Many old sailors I knew firmly believed the souls of sailors lost at sea inhabited albatross.

We caught sharks in a similar manner, only the hook was a huge thing with a piece of chain a fathom long so that the fish could not bite it through. We caught these ocean scavengers and man-eaters with great gusto. Immediately the shark was hauled on to the deck a long hand-spike was pushed down its throat and the beast secured to a stanchion ; it was

## HOME FROM THE SEA

killed and then cut up. The backbone when cleaned and wired was used for making walking sticks.

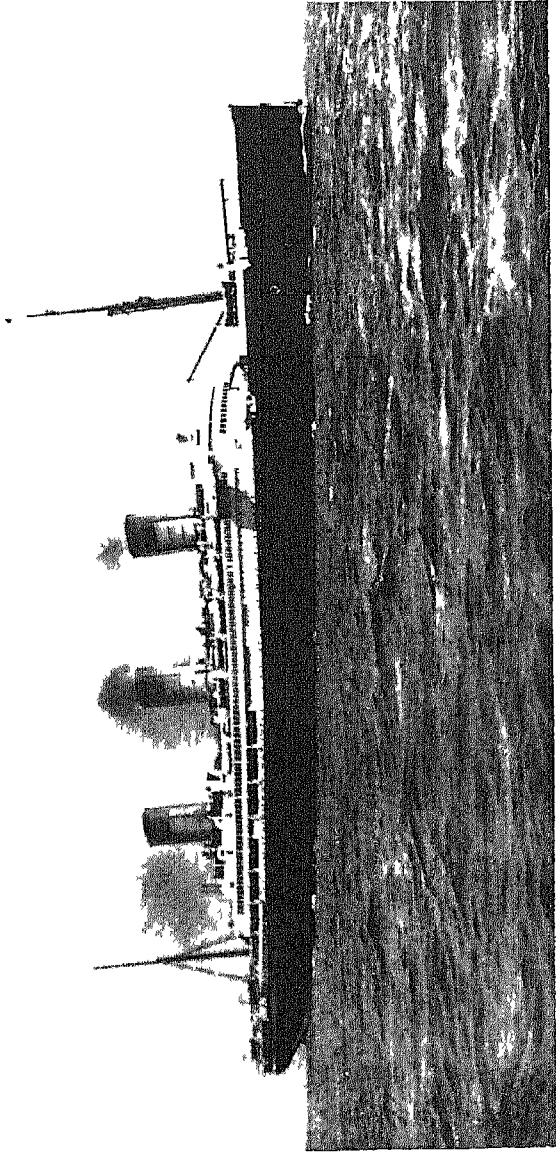
Now here is an interesting thing about the shark. When danger threatens it swallows its young, disgorging them again when in safe waters. I know the taste of young shark as I ate one for breakfast one day when I remember we had eight sharks on deck, three of which had young.

On the same morning—we were becalmed near the line in the Pacific—we had sent away a boat which returned with twelve large turtle, and, in addition, one had been “grained” earlier in the morning. That sounds like a Lord Mayor’s banquet, doesn’t it? But . . . not a soul on board knew anything about making turtle soup! The cook managed to get us a few turtle steaks—but they were not relished.

Occasionally we would see a fight between a whale and a thrasher. The latter, after the whale has been feeding, comes alongside Mr. Whale and thrashes himself out of the sea on to the head of the mammal to make him disgorge his catch. To see a whale stand on its tail and come down with a thunderous crash to try and kill its tormentor—a beastly sneak-thief—is particularly interesting.

Off Cape of Good Hope we would sometimes pass through shoals of fish—fish of different kinds. Even shoals of salmon are met and we could catch them hand over hand—but we even got tired of fresh salmon!

I think the most weird noise one can hear at sea



*R.M.S. Berengai*



## THEN AND NOW

is the call of the penguins down by the Horn on a dark stormy night. The birds come out many miles from land and the call they make is very similar to the human cry of distress.

Ah well, a long way off those times. Now we run to a time-table, heedless of storm and calm.

It seems like peeping into another age to catch a glimpse of the days when we used to man the capstan (to heave in the ropes or warp the ship along) and the windlass (to weigh the anchor). It's all done by steam now or electricity. And dead are the old chanties we sang—yelled so lustily as we worked. Instead, the noise of the winches offends the ear. No rattle and fall of coal making a night hideous; we spread our white wings and let the breezes bowl us along with a song in the rigging and music at the prow. Another step has brought oil in place of coal and clean clothes for the stokers below, who turn on taps instead of shovelling night and day stripped to the waist. Dare we look ahead for our next phase? Will it be flying? It's a long way off. We have much to learn before there can be any reliability in flight across the Atlantic. Surface vessels have too much in their favour for the air to displace them—accommodation for one thing and reliability as yet, for another.

I can look back to the nights on a passenger ship when one wax candle afforded all the illumination between two cabins. Hot water was carried to the passengers in jugs; baths were luxuries. Smoke-

## HOME FROM THE SEA

rooms were just being added ; libraries were practically unknown.

Progress has meant two things—speed and comfort, though with us it has always been safety first. Out of common experience a hundred devices have come into use that make for safety—inventions apart altogether from lifeboats, bulkheads, and so on. Wireless, wireless direction-finders, the fathometer (for taking soundings), smoke and fire detectors.

Many people imagine the lot of a captain and his officers on a modern liner is one round of pleasure and good food. We do mix with the passengers and share with them the luxuries of the ship. We have excellent quarters which make old berths look like the cheapest kind of doss-houses. But that is not all. See these same men on the bridge. It is a wintry night. A gale is sending the spray over as high as the bridge, though that may be ninety feet above the water-line. The rain beats into the face, striking like pellets from a gun—one of the penalties of great speed. The visibility is bad. It's bitterly cold. There are other ships somewhere in the vicinity.

These officers have no time now for comfort or for laziness. All that luxury, all that sense of safety enjoyed by the passengers dancing below, are in these men's care.

A sudden emergency—a quick decision.

Down below no one knows of it, that threat of trouble, but on the bridge a thrill has run up a man's spine to be followed by a sigh of relief. All's well.

## CHAPTER XV

### A WORD FOR THE MEN

ONE of the most significant changes that has taken place in the Merchant Navy during the past fifty years is in regard to the personnel. Gone are the days when it was almost an understood thing—certainly never a surprising one—that a ship's crew should come on board for a voyage all hopelessly drunk. It meant kicks and douches of cold water to get enough life into them to work the vessel out of port, and days would pass before anything in the shape of discipline could be established. If we were forced (usually through desertions) to take on hands in foreign ports, the very lowest dregs of humanity were what we got, shoved on board insensible by villains who sold the men into this servitude. Watch a crew come on board a modern liner and you will see a set of men as sober, as efficient, and as keen as any group of workers going into a business premises. More, I should venture to urge, because they haven't the manifold distractions of workers on shore ; they are thrown more together and naturally grow into a sort of brotherhood. It is in fact a big club of which every one is a member, rather than a community of separate workers.



## HOME FROM THE SEA

The ship is full of social life among the crew.

When in port the majority of the men prefer to remain on board. The attractions on shore are many and various, but I believe the seaman has a far greater sense of his responsibilities to-day than formerly, and prefers to save all he can for his family at home.

The men are quieter and remain in the same ships for years, which is sufficient guarantee of their character.

It is both pleasant and interesting to note this change during the last twenty years. Nowadays, when one meets these men on shore, they are well dressed, self-respecting, quiet members of the community, men to be proud of, men who are everywhere trusted and highly respected.

The passengers themselves derive the benefit of this change.

Nor is it chiefly the cost of entertainment on shore that keeps the men on the ship ; they stay because they find more interest among their comrades.

Each voyage in New York the committee of the various clubs would arrange social and athletic events. Several times a year the crew would give a dance in New York with permission to invite a number of friends. An orchestra would be engaged, or, as was often the case, the men's own orchestra would provide the music. Concerts were given, occasionally friends from shore augmenting the concert party.

I witnessed an excellent pantomime on board the

## A WORD FOR THE MEN

*Berengaria* a year or two ago played entirely by members of the crew. Nearly every voyage the men would have a cinema show. Mr. Bell, the representative of the Seamen's Union in New York, was untiring in his efforts to keep the men happy and contented when in port and we all owe him a deep sense of gratitude for his unfailing courtesy in coming down, often at great inconvenience to himself.

Again, a whist drive would take place with jolly good prizes for the successful players, prizes being provided from the small entrance fees, etc. Football, cricket, tennis all in their due seasons. The trophy cabinets on board the ships testify to the prowess of the several teams—each ship holds some beautiful souvenirs in the form of silver cups. Boat racing, inter-departmental and international, takes place annually, the Inter-departmental Cup and medals being given by the Cunard S.S. Company. One smiled sometimes to see the deck hands soundly beaten by the stewards. It is astonishing the interest the men take in their clubs and each ship is most jealous of its reputation.

Besides the social and athletic clubs, there is the Sick Benefit Club, the men paying a small subscription each voyage to keep in benefit. Should a member fall sick a certain amount is paid to him. If a member should pass away his nearest relatives receive quite a respectable amount to help over bad times.

The ship's company of the *Berengaria* provided a cot in the Southampton Children's Hospital, the £600 necessary for the cot being raised in two years. These

## HOME FROM THE SEA

things keep the men together, and it is no wonder that the Service to-day is as different as chalk from cheese from what it was even twenty years ago. I found out long ago that if you want good work, good men, loyalty and service, one must appeal to the human instinct of his men.

Not only I but every officer under me did our utmost to foster this spirit of camaraderie ; it made not only for general comfort but for general efficiency. I often wonder business houses don't do more than they do towards this happy goal.

I remember some years ago attending a dinner in New York at which several big business men were present. Politics was represented that night by President Taft, and education, business and other professions had distinguished members there. Next to me was a famous educationist. After dinner we swung our chairs and chatted. My table companion and I were talking about his sphere of work in life.

“ You have a Chair of Greek, a Chair of Engineering, and lots more Chairs at your university,” I remarked, “ but, to my mind, in yours, and all other similar institutions, there is still a vacant Chair.”

“ Oh,” said he, his brows raised. “ And what's that ? ”

“ A Chair of Humanity,” I answered.

I don't think he took that very seriously, yet a few months afterwards I read in an English newspaper that the very thing—a Chair of Humanity—had been established at one of our own universities.

The sailor is so close to nature that you need to have this human understanding of him to make him happy in his job. And it is to that understanding, existing as it did on all the ships of which I had command, that I put down the long record of smooth working. There was always a spirit of goodwill prevailing.

Let me tell you of an occasion to prove what I say. It was in 1925 when there was a sort of world strike on among ships' crews—a disaffection that was obviously engineered by Bolshevik propaganda. It was unauthorized ; that is, our own Seamen's Unions were not behind it and did not wish to support it. Yet the trouble grew, and men like Havelock Wilson were doing their best to frustrate its spread. Wilson had gone to Canada to see what he could do, for the unrest was at work there, out in Australia, South Africa—everywhere. Two days from New York I received a wireless from him asking if he could hold a meeting on the *Mauretania*. I at once answered : “ Certainly.”

On arrival, there was a letter from him suggesting that the meeting should be held on the following Sunday. He came at eleven o'clock and I had the crew mustered.

There were several other men with Wilson, and I met them in the library.

“ Is everything all right ? ” the leader asked, and I detected a note of nervousness underlying his question.

“ Yes,” I told him.

“ Will they receive me ? ”

## HOME FROM THE SEA

He explained that on other ships he had met several hostile receptions and he didn't want to have any unpleasantness if he could help it.

I sent for the staff captain to interview the assembled men ; told him to point out that Mr. Wilson had come to talk to them and that I expected them to receive him courteously ; that he was our guest on board and they were to listen to what he had to say.

"How did they take it?" Wilson asked the staff captain when he returned.

"All right," said the officer.

While my officer had been on his errand, Wilson told me he had already been on two ships in New York and his reception had been decidedly unfriendly ; he had, in fact, been told to "get out" ; that was why he wished to know the attitude of our men.

"Don't you worry ; this is the *Mauretania*," I said. "They will listen to you all right."

They received him very well. He was so struck with their behaviour, the sportsmanlike manner of the meeting, that he came home with us that very voyage, finding more and more evidence of the fact that officers and men on board were good shipmates.

There was no strike among our crew.

Men have hesitated to leave a happy ship even to improve themselves ! I remember on the *Mauretania* four officers hated a parting, though promotion caused it. They had grown to be quite a famous bridge four. But a deck officer moved on and then Mr. J. W. Lawler, the purser, changed to the *Aquitania*.

## A WORD FOR THE MEN

We gave him a presentation and a rousing send-off, but had the bridge four not have been already broken he would have found it harder to break away.

They are a good lot, these men who use the sea. I could write a volume about them. The demands of the travelling public for better and better service have tended to bring into the big liners a far finer type of man, just as the change from coal to oil highered the social standing of the engine-room staff. The old haphazard ways went, and with regular sailings, really excellent food and comfortable accommodation, a higher class of worker was attracted. Concerning officers, examinations became harder because the larger ships meant greater responsibilities just as they also meant better conditions.

The sailor to-day is a serious, sober fellow. I have seen him change from the reckless devil-may-care who took every advantage of considerateness, thinking it softness, and who understood an order better if the man who gave it could enforce it with his fists if necessary.

He is devout in his way. There is a simple faith which is his far more than is in evidence amongst shore workers. He doesn't boast about his beliefs but is not ashamed of them. I recall a member of my crew who fell ill and developed a serious internal complaint, so quickly that an operation was immediately necessary. It was performed by the ship's surgeon at sea. After a few days I went down to see how he was going on. He was perfectly cheerful.

## HOME FROM THE SEA

“ I knew it was going to be all right,” he said. “ Just before the operation I said a little prayer—didn’t I, nurse ? ” he finished, addressing the girl at his bedside. Not often does the sailor speak so openly as that of his faith, but it is there sure enough and if you think of it, it is natural it should be. Nature in all her moods is round about him ; it is so easy a step from watching nature in her vigorous strength and in the serenity of her beauty at sea, to an abiding belief that behind it all there is a destiny shaping our ends.

No, he doesn’t talk much. And he objects to be made the object of window-dressing by those who do. He likes practice, not precept, and will turn from the ranting professional religionist, but be glad to meet the type of cleric who lights a pipe and pushes his pouch across the table for a share.

This faith followed us through the war. There were times then when I have steamed on through fog knowing from their whistles that other ships have been about. Once on the Banks I went ahead and there seemed so many small craft around that surely a line must have opened for us to go through. Something told me it was all right, just as at other times I had the hunch to stop.

And how often we ignored the order sent out from the Admiralty that all shipping on receipt of news that a submarine had struck must shape a course twenty miles to port or starboard. It was one of those foolish orders that was thought out by some office official,

A WORD FOR THE MEN

I should think. In the Mediterranean we should never have reached our destination but have made a grasshopper course all over the sea, so many submarines were operating. As often as not I ignored the report of a submarine attack and went right over the spot where it had taken place. It was as safe as any other. We were never hit.



## CHAPTER XVI

### “GO TO SEA, MY LADS”

**I**F we lose faith in the merchant service ; if we allow other countries to creep in and surpass us ; if we fall so far behind in the world race that we cannot find sufficient trade to keep our ships full and busy about the seas, then England will be on the decline. For our ships are the barometers of our prosperity.

Again, if that love of the seafaring life is extinguished in our youth, the spirit that has made us will flicker and die. Therefore, with whatever inspiration I can instil into the words, I bring a message to the boys of England to turn their eyes to the sea that surrounds us and regard it as among the great jobs they can go for.

At the moment things maritime are none too rosy. There are hundreds of thousands of tons of shipping held up in harbours round the coast because there is no profitable business for them to do ; hundreds of ships idle ; it's a bit heartbreaking. And the big liners are suffering in similar manner from the universal depression. But I will not be pessimistic ; things are showing some signs of improvement, and as soon as the depression is past there will be probably more travellers than ever—especially from America.

“ GO TO SEA, MY LADS ”

Perhaps, too, we shall learn not to permit foreign ships to keep busy bringing in foreign goods that compete with our own and, instead, use our own ships to carry merchandise backwards and forwards among the far-flung parts of our own Empire.

There's a good job of work at sea for a British boy. I am often asked what sort of a career it offers. I always answer that it depends on the boy. Is he keen ; does the call of the sea and its glamour of movement pull more than office life and gay hose ; is he prepared to work with no eye on the clock ; and has he patience enough to wait the opportunity to gain promotion ? If so, he'll have a good healthy life, be of some real service to the world and, even though he may not land one of the coveted appointments such as command of a big liner, he will get his ship, live well, and in age can find himself with a sufficient competence.

He won't have to go through the mill like we did forty years ago. He won't go into sail at all now, and I am not one who thinks an officer trained entirely in steam is not just as capable of commanding the biggest ship afloat as the man who has been through all the training of a sailing ship. He may not be an all-round sailor ; but he can be a thoroughly efficient seaman.

I recommend every boy going to sea to have a couple of years on one of the training cadet ships such as the *Conway* in the Mersey, the *Worcester* in the Thames, or the nautical training school *Pangbourne*. He will get invaluable ground-work, and it is also a

good test as to whether he will like the life. For he's got to go through several years of hard work even if he does not have to face the gruelling and exposure we youngsters had—and let me assure you my early experiences were by no means exceptional. Other boys in bad ships lived through horrors that fortunately were not our lot, because the ships I served in were as good as any afloat, with splendid officers who found no especial joy in “taking it out” of a lad.

The modern apprentice goes straight into a steamer, and after all, it's a man's life with a chance to see this world of ours. He will have to work, he will have to study. Navigation is of paramount importance. That is readily understood when I tell you it costs as much as £6 in fuel alone to drive a modern liner every mile it goes through the water. Every revolution of the engines that is made extra, because the vessel has veered from the straightest course, is wasting the owners' money.

The majority of officers must be content to remain in cargo ships ; only a select few will reach the bridge of a big liner. But command of any sort is achievement ; a responsible and satisfying job of work. One thing that puts a young man off, I suppose, is the loss of home life. If you feel you must get home to your meals, then the sea is not for you. At one period in my career four years went by during which I did not have forty-eight consecutive hours' leave. And I was an officer in a liner at that !

After three or four years as an apprentice—for good-

“ GO TO SEA, MY LADS ”

ness' sake be a real, working apprentice, with your coat off and shirt-sleeves rolled up—you'll sit for your second mate's examination. Stick to cargo ships, learn how everything is done and how to do it. Leave the liners, if that is your ambition, until later on. Treat the men under you so as not to lose them their self-respect and you may be sure they will be more loyal servants if, when occasion arises for complaint on your part, you know what you are talking about and can do yourself what you are asking of them.

Then your mate's ticket and, after another twelve or eighteen months at sea, you sit for master or extra master. The worst of your troubles are then over and the next thing is to secure a position in a good company. Rolling stones gather no moss and you won't get anywhere by constantly changing lines. If your thoughts are on a first-class liner, you must be prepared to wait perhaps twenty years for your big chance, but you will get command quicker if you stick to cargo ships. For one thing, far more training is essential for the crack liners. Let us have a look round and you will get some idea of the job ahead.

The liner captain must be something of an hotel manager—of a tip-top hotel at that. He must understand food and cooking. Service is very important if passengers are to be satisfied and recommend one vessel as against another—and competition is as keen in this respect as it is among first-class hotels on shore. You have to watch your waiters and see that their work is efficient and respectful.

## HOME FROM THE SEA

The reader would be aghast at the quantities and weights of different articles we carry. Table silver and cutlery would go into thousands of pieces and weigh tons. Linens, with bed linen and blankets, may easily reach well over one hundred thousand pieces. The usual home laundry of a moderate household might run into dozens, but with a large liner many thousands. I remember on one occasion we had been delayed by fog, having to anchor outside New York Harbour for forty-eight hours. We eventually arrived at our dock in New York and made fast at 10.30 a.m., being due to sail at 2.30 next morning—sixteen hours !

We sailed at 2.30 on scheduled time and in the meantime we had sent 40,000 pieces of linen to the laundry. By 2 a.m. next day it was all back on board and stowed away in the linen rooms—cleaned, dried and packed in its parcels of dozens. The ship was restored with provisions and had taken on board nearly 5,000 tons of fresh water and 6,000 tons of oil fuel by 2.30 a.m. We had landed all our passengers and their baggage and by 8 p.m. the ship was ready to receive our hundreds of passengers crossing to France and England.

At 9.30 p.m. on the day of arrival our outward cargo was not quite discharged, nor was there a bag of homeward mail on board. At 2.30 a.m. we sailed with over 12,000 bags of mail and about 1,200 tons of cargo. Sixteen hours after mooring up the ship at the dock we were unmooring for our return voyage ; surely a record for such service, and this was the

“ GO TO SEA, MY LADS ”

*Berengaria*. Organization and system, plus team work and willing hands did this, and the job was a credit to those who performed the supervision. The sea is no place for eight-hour-a-day men.

Speaking of numbers ; the largest liners will carry from fifty to sixty or more lifeboats on her decks. And it often amused me to hear passengers speak of such a ship as the *Berengaria* as a boat. “ Boat ? ” would be my reply. “ We carry scores of boats ; perhaps you mean the ship.”

It may be interesting to know that even to this day these huge ships are referred to as Mail Packets, a term of one hundred years ago. What a chasm has been crossed during that hundred years !

Every voyage the captain will inspect his entire ship, taking a section each day. He will test ventilation, see that the heating is right, track down any odours there may be, make sure the water supply is good. He will visit the kitchens and store-rooms, and it's no use just looking in, he's got to know the work so that he can inquire intelligently about it. The conduct of the whole crew will find a reflection from the capabilities of the captain. He will commend when things are in good order and kick when they're not. He should understand something about printing, for this is quite an important branch of work. Hundreds of menus are printed each day, ordinary and special ; notices of horse-racing, boxing matches and other pastimes ; concert programmes ; notices for passengers' guidance ; many cards in connexion

## HOME FROM THE SEA

with the navigation of the ship, to say nothing of the daily newspaper.

He will take an interest in the hospitals. These are very up to date. In other days we had one surgeon, no nurses ; now there are two surgeons, in addition to dispensers, sisters, and attendants. Everything on the ship is improved like that. Where once our orchestra was composed of three, there are now a dozen or more performers. Two men are entirely concerned with the running of the cinema. There is a man in charge of the gym.—we go and see him and have him put the electric animals and vibrators working to see they are in order. Another attendant is looking after the swimming pool, another the Turkish bath. The captain wants to be assured the water in the pool is fresh and clean ; and he will discuss questions of heating with the gardener.

He will, of course, inspect all the logs. The surgeon's could reveal interesting stories. At times there are births on board—not as many as there used to be ! In old days we expected one or more every voyage—do you guess why ? It was a fact that emigrants arranged their travel over so that those events could take place *en route*. They got the best of treatment, the height of comfort and the most skilled of attention—all for nothing ! Besides that, it was quite the custom for the passengers to get up a subscription for the new-comers.

The wireless room will be visited. This is equivalent to the business-man's office telephone.

Lots of messages will come from head office. Sometimes it is to give information to the purser

“ GO TO SEA, MY LADS ”

about the number of passengers expected next voyage ; or it may be for the purser to inform someone that a sum of money has been paid into the office to his credit : in fact the nature of these messages received from head office might be likened to the telephone instructions from the manager's office to every department of a large and scattered works.

The sight of the wireless officers sitting at their instruments, sending and receiving messages in the quiet, tense atmosphere of their room, has always fascinated me. I used to watch them and wonder from what distant part of the globe the next message might come.

I was always intensely interested also in the wireless equipment on board, and the senior wireless officer took a keen delight in explaining his latest gadgets to me. What a far cry from those early days when one hundred miles' range was an absolute marvel ! Now the range is—round the world.

Inspections should be taken seriously and by no means cursorily. Perhaps I made a bit of a fetish of them. I remember, anyhow, during the war, in the *Ivernia* while laying at Malta, I was going rounds, in company with the commanding officer of the troops. The men thought it was a bit uncanny what a knack I had for pulling out just the one locker that was untidy or discovering a piece of crockery that was out of sight and dirty. On our way round that morning a message came down that a communication had arrived from the Admiralty Superintendent on shore ordering us to proceed by signal.



## HOME FROM THE SEA

“ Will you carry on with the inspection ? ” I asked the commanding officer. “ I must go on the bridge.”

You could almost hear the sighs of relief ; in two minutes it was all over the ship—“ The skipper’s on the bridge.” They were free of my practised eye for the day.

Apart from this touring of the premises, so to speak, the captain is responsible for everything, including good conduct. He will get some knotty little problems brought before him—and he has no policeman to call in and no court to apply to. He is magistrate and court while at sea. Two years ago on the *Berengaria* we had on board a suspected person. I was warned that he was crossing for the purpose of being put on trial for something—it was a financial matter, not any violent crime. On the voyage he wished to send some wireless messages. The operator, knowing the circumstances, came to me and asked whether he should send them or not. Now, this man had been offered the alternative of being brought over in charge of a detective, under a sort of open arrest and subject, therefore, to strict surveillance, or paying his passage and having the freedom of an ordinary traveller. He quite understood that he would be arrested on arrival, but he had chosen to pay passage for himself and his wife and therefore he was officially in my eyes an ordinary first-class passenger.

“ Yes, send the messages,” I ordered the wireless officer, “ but,” I added, “ keep careful note of what they are so that they can be produced should they

“ GO TO SEA, MY LADS ”

have any bearing on the case.” They were all dispatched and I heard no more about them.

Seeing that on a ship we are, as it were, a complete community afloat—all compact like a little walled-in city—it is only to be expected that we get a constant mixture of comedy and tragedy.

Crossing once from Southampton to Cherbourg we had on board an engaged couple who were to be met on arrival by the lady’s punctilious mamma. The young man was evidently a bit fearful of the ordeal of that meeting—the first, I gathered. And he grew alarmed when we ran into fog and had to lie to in the Channel. I believe the safety of a thousand souls was nothing to the horror of what his intended’s mother might say at him and his sweetheart being together all night on the ship. I couldn’t help secretly smiling when he poured forth his “trouble” into my attentive ear—I was so accustomed to the younger generation’s unconventionality that this Victorian temerity was hardly credible.

Turning from that, one gets perhaps a message from shore when far at sea asking if the captain will be good enough to break some unhappy piece of news to someone on board—perhaps that a near relative has passed away. They think a personal recital of the event will come softer than a soulless message by wireless.

Every captain gets a score of frivolous complaints before he has commanded a liner a thousand years. It’s amazing how people complain about nothing—

## HOME FROM THE SEA

especially, I suspect, that type of person who, at home, is not at all accustomed to one-quarter the luxuries he—or she!—has on board. And he'll have to be very patient and polite—and firm—with the ladies who insist on having their dogs sleep in their cabins. “Oh, but we haven't been parted for years,” an elderly lady will cry, but the decree has to be issued—and the lady not too offended if one can help it.

Speaking of animals, sometimes we get curious live cargo. I have already referred to the poisonous snakes we once carried. On another occasion the *Mauretania* was chosen as the transport for a lion. It was to be turned over to the Zoo in New York. On arrival, the case was got to the boat deck and there, as it was being handled, came an ominous creak and it went over. Everyone scurried for cover. After a few minutes of intense quietness a man crawled up to it. No damage. The cage was then hoisted up and was actually being swung out to the dock when the bottom fell out. So, of course, did the lion—plump into the water. That lion made rather a fuss about the way America was receiving him, and I can assure you we were mighty glad when he was eventually lassoed by men who chased after him in boats. Suppose he had scrambled ashore somewhere. . . .

All luggage is officially in the captain's care and it is up to him to inquire into damage, and so on. There's a lot of it nowadays, but no increase in traffic equals the Christmas mail. When I was extra second in the *Etruria* and, therefore, also mail officer, we took

“ GO TO SEA, MY LADS ”

over what was at that time the record number of mail-bags one Christmas—2,800. In recent years 12,000 to 15,000 bags is not exceptional. More goodwill on the earth, evidently !

Everything is submitted to the captain. He has to decide and, what is more, has to stand for his decision when the ship reaches port and all things come under the legal code of the land. But the passengers' troubles are only a slight part of his task. He has to determine all questions about the safe running of the ship. Many people think, for instance, that when a pilot comes aboard the captain's authority and responsibility are superseded. Not at all. The captain is still the captain—even over the pilot. I have known a pilot run a ship aground because, poor fellow, he was on the verge of a seizure and was not responsible for what he was doing at the time. The captain of that vessel would have been blamed if he had not been at the man's side and was instantly ready to rectify the mistake he made. In the same way in many a Mediterranean port when our large vessel has been pretty well hemmed in by small craft, a pilot has sworn that it was impossible to proceed to sea.

“ Not it,” I have told him. “ Watch ! ” And I have nosed my ship through a swarm of small boats, gently shoving them out of the way, until I have been clear. The pilot wanted tugs to go ahead and do this—more expense.

Indeed, very often it was but a trick on the part

## HOME FROM THE SEA

of a native pilot who was in collusion with the tug-owner and shared in the fees. A captain has always to be on the look out for the cheat. There are tricks in every trade, I suppose, but some in the shipping business are a bit startling—especially when you get east of Gibraltar.

The Black Sea seems a natural home for chicanery. Several times I have been asked by a British Consul to survey a ship that has gone aground. You get three guineas for that job and of course conveyance expenses, but each occasion I discovered the skipper of the stranded vessel expected to receive a third of that modest fee—as though to say but for him I should not have the job of inspecting damage, and so on.

That's not "serious," but what is downright dishonesty are those pilots who deliberately in certain places in the Black Sea ran their ships aground. They picked out favourable conditions, ran her on some hospitable spit of soft sand at high water and there she stranded. It means—if the trick is carefully handled—no damage to the hull, but it entails help from tugs and lighters to take off cargo so that she can be refloated. That costs money—and I'm sorry to say the "earnings" were split between the parties concerned.

On the other hand, the honest captain is always open to be shot at until a man has established a reputation for playing fair himself and jolly well seeing others play fair with him. Shore traders will try a dozen methods of cheating him.

“ GO TO SEA, MY LADS ”

You don't want to go east of Suez to have a coal merchant or a ship chandler charge exorbitant prices for supplies. I've known some pretty sharp practice when I first had command, and it was rather fortunate I had met captains of many years' service in the Mediterranean who gave me their experiences and warned me of the tricks of this trade in every port east of Gibraltar.

Coal was just a black harvest for many coal merchants, and the dodges they resorted to were often ingenious. In most of these ports ships were coaled from lighters, the cubical contents being taken to obtain the amount of coal. Some lighters would load as much as two hundred tons, others a mere fifty, but I soon learnt that both large and small lighters required not only careful measurement but close inspection if we were to receive our full weight.

It may sound a bit incredible, but it is a fact that hollow spaces—wire cages—were sometimes constructed in lighters, the coal piled all round and above. In others tubs and packing-cases would be left lying at the bottom, all of which meant a ship was not getting the quantity ordered and paid for.

Another favourite pastime of the coal suppliers was carefully—though apparently carelessly—to allow coal in process of loading ship to fall overboard into the water. When the ship had left, expert divers went down and retrieved what had been “lost.” I have even known cases in which quite openly the fuel is dredged for. On occasion as much as five per cent.

## HOME FROM THE SEA

of coal in this way has been lost to the ship—and saved to the merchant.

Many pow-wows have taken place over quantity, but always to accuse these gentry of direct dishonesty only brought tears to their eyes and the pious cry that they “ never did such a thing, Mister Captain.”

I doubt—knowing the breed—whether these twisters, with their ill-gotten gains in their pockets, ever paused to wonder what might happen if, because of their tricks, a ship was left stranded with empty bunkers.

I saw my chief engineer was up to their tricks and the way he and his assistants watched a barge when coaling you might have thought its contents were really black diamonds. But Cunard chief engineers are not anybody’s babies to be fooled by coal-lighter people. I’ve seen rows and I’ve heard the King’s English spoken and shouted with additions that would satisfy any professor of the necessity of keeping a dictionary up to date !

When it comes to supplying stores—*i.e.* eatables—then the chief steward is responsible and you can depend on it, whether east of Gibraltar or west of that port, north or south, he has his eyes and nose well functioning to be able to detect fraud in either quantity or quality.

On the Atlantic run our catering was spread over all the three countries served—England, France and America. Some articles are cheaper here, some there. Large as is the problem of feeding a ship, the affair has through years of experience been brought down

“ GO TO SEA, MY LADS ”

to a science. There are naturally occasions when a sudden influx of passengers at the last moment creates the necessity of providing for and serving hundreds of meals more than was anticipated. Nowadays it merely means sending a chit to the caterers to provide for so many more passengers and engaging another dozen or so stewards—they are always ready to hand.

To see the reception and examination of stores as they arrive alongside is a most interesting exhibition of housekeeping. Chief steward or second steward and his assistants smelling, testing and feeling samples from every crate, box or bag before it is allowed to go on board. See the butcher pinch his meats, the chef his chickens with a look of approval or otherwise as the crates of game, etc., are unloaded ready for their attention. The storing gang provide a lesson to many a housewife but, of course, these men have the advantage, they haven't paid for it, though they are accountable for every egg-shell that passes on board.

Gone are the days when the storekeeper issued ad lib. to any request for an article under his supervision. Now waste is eliminated to such an extent that it is just as if every ounce was paid for over the counter in a store or shop. The storekeeper weighs in ounces, not merely in pounds, and every order is signed and countersigned. The quantity is served neither one over nor one less.

The amount of food thrown over from an Atlantic liner thirty or more years ago fed most of the whales and larger fish in North Atlantic ; the gulls knew a



## HOME FROM THE SEA

liner as well as any shore person. Now there's a scarcity of whales, and gulls seem to have adopted birth control !

There used to be a joke that you seldom saw a gull anywhere near a vessel hailing north of the Tweed ; they had no confidence in finding a meal from such ships, but to-day in no big passenger ship is there waste.

I remember in my sailing ship days the firms owning the ships would have their house flags even as the shipping firms at the present day. Sometimes you might see a house flag—a red square flag perhaps and on it three letters, maybe—W.S.M.—and you can imagine what the men in such a line would name it : Want, Starvation, Misery—and it's wonderful really how aptly many of those lines were named from the letters or designs on their house flags.

This rather reminds me of an old gag concerning the reputation of shipowners who favoured a certain locality in these islands. Their ships were not noted for generous food allowance to the crew—Board of Trade scale was their motto ; they paid their captains and officers and men simply because they had to pay. But the locality, and it was pretty extensive at that, was a chapel one and it was said about the shipowners : “ They pray on their knees on Sundays and prey on their sailors the rest of the week.” There was a deal of truth in it. They were as a rule a mean lot.

It may not be generally known, but many suspicious cases have come to light not only in days gone by but

“ GO TO SEA, MY LADS ”

in fairly recent times, in which ambitious would-be ship-owners bought up some old vessel for a mere song ; insured the ship for a good sum, sent her to sea on her legitimate business with a pious hope she would never return. Many ships never did return. Lost with all hands and no reason was given, none found ; simply “ lost at sea.” Probably if the truth had been told many of these ships were “ lost ” before they left port.

You’ve got to remember in this connexion that no compensation was given when “ all hands ” were lost with their ship ; no compensation if a man fell from aloft and was fatally or seriously injured. Nothing if men were washed overboard or fell overboard when at sea simply because those men were doing all they could to save the company’s property. And wages were two pounds a month for seamen—officers and masters a little higher ; food, just B.O.T. allowance and diddled over that when possible. The seaman was just the fool to be sent to do the dirty work, take all the risks and chances and, as to the officers and master, the responsibility as well.

The world is changing, and time too. Many ships of years ago were just “ coffin ships,” called such and known as such. In nearly every case these ships sooner or later earned their name. One can quite understand the present power of the Unions. It took many years to make the fool slaves realize their treatment and what it could be ; took many years of hard work, hard times, often terms of imprisonment of the

## HOME FROM THE SEA

leaders, before the unions were sufficiently powerful to dictate their terms. But to-day, thanks to such leaders as Havelock Wilson, the seaman has advantages and rights which were never even dreamed of forty years ago.

I remember on arriving in Queenstown after my second voyage, the pilot brought us word that the Board of Trade were issuing a new scale of provisions for sailors. Didn't we boys just imagine telling the steward to go somewhere else when he offered a few "manavellings" (food left over from the officers' mess) in exchange for a good shirt, pair of trousers, etc. Jove, we thought he'd be coming to us to help him with extras for the cabin table! It didn't eventuate but the scale was improved—a little!

"Full and plenty" came in full force though when I joined the Cunard Company. I was aghast at the bill of fare for the men and more so when I saw how the officers' mess was maintained.

Often when on the bridge at night keeping watch I caught a most appealing and appetizing smell coming up from the stokehold—this was the stew or the hoodle (pronounced "'oodle" by the stokers) which the men had made themselves.

When going my round of inspection even in my late ships I would taste the soup in the crew's kitchen and tell the crew cook to have some sent up to my cabin. I really enjoyed it; the real thing—meat and vegetables and no fancy flavouring, just the essence of everything good. I often felt I could enjoy the

“ GO TO SEA, MY LADS ”

dinner being cooked for the men ; juicy steaks and joints, creamy potatoes boiling in the boilers or browning in the ovens ; vegetables simmering in their boilers and the soup offering its savoury and appetizing smell and then to finish up, perhaps a nice brown milk pudding setting off a real home meal. I often told my men I could never afford to have on shore such menus as our third-class passengers have at the present time.

The “ down unders ” of a generation or more ago are getting infinitely better attention than those who were the “ upper class ” at that time. Of one thing I’m certain, neither the seamen nor the third-class passengers get anything at home comparable to what they are served at sea in quality, quantity or cooking.

I have had several chief stewards in my ship who started as bell boys about the same time I joined the Cunard Company as a junior officer, and it has always been a pleasure to me to see how these boys have won their positions and gained the top rung of the ladder.

It gave me great pleasure to have under my command senior officers and staff captains who were junior officers with me in my earlier commands and knowing them for their true worth I feel the Cunard Company and the travelling public need never regret we older men are turning over our ships to the safe keeping of the younger officers. Neither the House flag flying at the main truck nor the Ensign flying over the stern will ever know dishonour or incom-

## HOME FROM THE SEA

petency as long as such officers and men I've known are in command.

There is still one department on board which is most deserving of special notice—yes, and of praise—the Engineering Department. One can realize how the responsibility has grown in the monster ships of the present day, what with the complicated machinery and all the modern innovations not only as regards the main engines, but electrical, ventilating, safety, water supplies with which these present-day ships are fitted. Too much cannot be said in favour of the chief engineers and all those whose work it is to see every mechanical device in the ship runs smoothly and efficiently.

It has always been a marvel to me how in the world the engineers in these huge liners can keep track of everything under their charge; it's a job which requires brains and executive ability to run these days, and it shows itself in the class of officers and men in charge of the different sections.

No thumb-nail knowledge will suffice to run these big ships; education, study, sobriety and executive ability are a *sine qua non* for any engineer officer aspiring to join up a present-day liner.

It may interest readers to know that down below—from underneath the bridge to right aft up to the rudder post—there is nothing but machinery and boilers in the largest liners of the day. And to the engineering department I take off my hat and say: "Well done!"

“ GO TO SEA, MY LADS ”

There's a proverb that you can't teach old dogs new tricks. All I can say is that any senior man who is incapable of assimilating sufficient knowledge to understand all the latest and most up-to-date gadgets now in use on board the floating palaces—well, the sooner he swallows the anchor and moors up on shore the better.

Despite the demands elsewhere, social and business, it is on the bridge that the master's chief duty lies. He must constantly be checking and watching all the instruments and other aids to navigation. And he may get a visit from the chief engineer who wants to know why we can't keep from zigzagging and so avoid the slip or loss of propeller power. There's something all the time to be looking out for. Believe me, an officer of a liner works hard. Every one of them puts in an average of not less than eleven to twelve hours on duty every day at sea, what with his watch and the overhauling of instruments and charts, hundreds of reports that have to be made out every voyage and the logs to be written up, and so on. By the way, there are several logs on a ship. In the first place there is the slate log on the bridge kept by the officer of the watch. He records everything seen, number of revolutions of the engine, distance, weather, and so on. Every four hours this is copied out into the ship's log and the slate is wiped clean every twenty-four hours. It is actually a slate, and a slate pencil is used. Then there is the official log which is kept for the Board of Trade in which is recorded everything

## HOME FROM THE SEA

concerning the members of the crew—wages, health, dismissals, desertions, etc. Then there are the engine-room, wireless and surgeon's logs—there isn't much that happens on board that does not get recorded officially.

A busy life and a good one. I can honestly say I have enjoyed every hour of my long seafaring experience. If I could go back I should want to do just what I have done—and a man is lucky if, when the time comes to retire, he can assert that. Thus with confidence I say to the young aspirant for captaincy in the Merchant Navy: You will have many worries, hard times and responsibilities, but it's worth it all. And, as the real inspiration for your life's work, remember you are a unit in a great service with hundreds of years of honourable and stirring traditions behind it. It's a grand profession.

## CHAPTER XVII

### WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

AFTER all this retrospect, let us look forward for a few moments. What does the future hold? At the time of writing Great Britain possesses the speed records of the world on land and sea and in the air. But a German liner boasts the blue riband of the Atlantic. Is that coveted distinction to remain hers? Well, we think not.

It is hardly within my sphere to go into any details of the new Cunarder that is building on the Clyde. To be sure, I have talked with those who are responsible for her construction. There is one man I believe, waking and sleeping, who is thinking of nothing but those engines which are to be fitted to this new mammoth liner. A six million job—it's colossal! A thousand feet long—colossal too! Yes, and a much greater problem than the man in the street imagines.

I recall incidents when, in command of the *Berengaria*, in turning we often had but a few feet of clearance owing to traffic and what not. I think too of that "S" course which is the entrance to Southampton Harbour. The experts have had to take all these things into consideration in planning the greatest ship ever floated, and in this connexion it is gratifying to



know that the Southampton Harbour Board is alive to the situation and intend doing their utmost to overcome certain difficulties.

But of one thing I am sure enough—there is no sort of danger in her actual size. Many a person, with a little knowledge and a sense to appreciate things, has asked me if a vessel of so great a length would not run the risk of breaking her back in exceptionally bad weather. These people have a picture in their minds of all that length of hull squatted between two gigantic waves of the Atlantic. They seem to think that when such waves swell the ocean's surface there is bound to come a moment when her bows and stern will be pitched high on two mountain tops, so to speak, with a vast void tugging at her bottom amidships. The builders of ships know what they are doing just as well as the engineer who spans a gorge with a bridge.

There is not the slightest risk about the length of the hull. And for this reason. No ship is ever poised as I have described, held firmly at either end with no support in the centre. There is a point of buoyancy, and that is certainly not at the end of the vessel. It is in the centre of the ship. No pull there. The whole structure gives to the rise and fall of the waves without putting undue strain on any one part. I've watched it dozens of times and never had any doubt in giving my opinion on the subject.

As in every fresh ship added to the Atlantic run, the new Cunarder will have even further comforts

## WHAT OF THE FUTURE ?

for her passengers, though how the present scale of luxury is to be exceeded may seem difficult of belief. The very fact that everything will be bigger is one obvious recommendation—more accommodation for promenading, for dancing, for games, and so on.

And what will she do by way of speed ? I cannot say. All I am inclined to set down here is that if the Cunard Company say they are going to do it, they will. And if anyone can bring back the blue riband of the Atlantic to this country, they can. The new ship, I expect, will shorten the crossing by something like a day.

I shall not be on her bridge. I have made my last voyage in command of an ocean liner. And, by the way, I may say that when I made that last voyage I did not know it. I had put in a requisition for retirement in May of this year. Months before that time came round I was given leave, a gracious concession. So that I never knew the last time I brought the *Berengaria* to dock but what I should be taking her across again. I think now it was a kindly act on the part of the directors. There is a certain sense of the ominous about a last voyage. We remember how my predecessor as Commodore, Sir James Charles, knew he was making his last passage. It was in every sense of the word his last voyage. He died almost as the ship docked.

It is, perhaps, a good thing to finish your days in harness. But there's something to be said for the Home Port at the end of the job, where one can see

HOME FROM THE SEA

the flowers under the sun, see and know better those in the home circle from whom duty has separated one so much—yes, more to be said for it than my pen can properly express.

